

URBAN DESIGN CONSULTEE RESPONSE

Ref.: 22/0958

Erection of a three storey building with basement to provide a 61 bedroom care home and associated accommodation, parking, landscaping and access

61 London Road, Camberley**Recommendations**

Brownfield site, with detached two storey residential buildings in generous plots to the west, east and south. The site is situated in the Historic Route Character Area, which forms part of the Mixed/Commercial areas in the Surrey Heath Western Urban Areas Character (WUAC) SPD. The application site is located along the London Road, the historic London to West Country toll road, and one of the main approaches to Camberley. The area opposite the site is attractive, dense woodland, characteristic for the northern side of London Road.

Urban design advice have been provided during the pre-app phase in 2021.

The reductions of the building footprint are not considered to fully overcome previous concerns, as the layout does not leave large enough gaps to the adjacent properties on the eastern and western side. Principle 6.6 of the Surrey Heath Residential Design Design Guide (SHRDG) SPD requires new residential development to respond to the size, shape and rhythm of surrounding plot layouts. Principle 7.4 of the SHRDG SPD requires new residential development to reflect the spacing, heights and building footprints of existing buildings, especially when these are local historic patterns.

The footprint is still considered to be overly deep, resulting in a cramped relationship to the neighbouring property to the south east, contrary to WUAC principle MK1, which requires deep, rear garden settings, typical for the area. The design principles of MK1 also advise a general building height of two storeys in this character area. Two storeys with accommodation in the roof would however be considered acceptable in principle from an urban design point of view in this location, subject to design.

Although a contemporary design cue is acceptable in principle, the overall scale and the large built form of the development are considered out of character and scale with the residential built context, characterised by mainly two storey buildings, set in generous garden settings. The detailed design, as exemplified by secondary gable elements in addition to the three main gable features on the front elevation and the many vertical elements in contrasting materials and colours create a busy, yet overly bulky and large scale development. In order to create a more balanced front elevation, a lighter, contrasting central element is advisable with ample glazing and a high degree of transparency to achieve an active frontage, brighter communal dining areas and a visual reduction of the scale, bulk and massing. There are no objections to the proposed materials per se; mainly brown multi brickwork, buff multi brick features, grey (slate type) roof tiles and Portland stone. However, the design approach and the detailing, such as the pointed, contrasting verticals and the striking black window surrounds on the front elevation result in a strong, domineering appearance, which is out of character for the area and does not integrate well with the existing built context.

High quality, contemporary architecture with exemplary detailing which reflects historical references and a more balanced, simplified front elevation is required in this sensitive

location from an urban design point of view. Pastiche development, on the other hand, will be resisted in line with the Surrey Heath Residential Design Guide (SHRDG) SPD.

Whilst the front elevation is considered to provide too much variation in terms of the combination of built elements, their scale, character and detailing, the blank facade along the western elevation, see side sections -illustration No. 4, is equally unacceptable from an urban design perspective, and contrary to the SHRDG SPD principle 9.4, boundary treatment. This window less facade which lacks articulation, in combination with the unrelieved massing and roofscape contribute to a uncharacteristic large scale impression, in-congruent with the scale, built form and character of the existing context, contrary to the National Design Guide, paragraph 38, as well as SHRDG SPD, and consequently unacceptable from an urban design perspective. The roof plan indicates very large areas of flat roof, which is contrary to SHRDG SPD, principle 7.5; "Proposals to introduce roof forms on residential development that diverge from the prevailing character of residential development will be resisted unless it can be demonstrated that the proposals would make a positive contribution to the streetscape."

The internal layout still causes concerns in terms of the lack of spaciousness in communal areas such as small, separated dining areas/lounges and a highly compartmentalised layout. From a sustainability perspective, for climate resilience and to improve functionality, the internal layout should be characterised by greater potential flexibility, e.g. possibilities to easily transform larger communal areas into several smaller spaces and vice versa. Communal areas should also provide better access to outdoor space/garden areas in prime, sunny locations. The easily accessible main shared garden space is limited and north-facing.

The entrance lobby is considered too small to provide a positive sense of arrival. The reception ground floor WC should be more discretely located, especially given the adjacent bistro area.

However, the introduction of communal break out spaces, "destination points", at the northern ends of the mid corridors, potential winter gardens, are valuable additions, especially for residents who are unable to use outdoor patios/garden.

The basement library is considered very small, as it requires also comfortable seating areas and back lighting to become useful and attractive. Accommodation in the basement causes concerns and is not considered to provide high quality, permanent living standards.

The outdoor space to the north-west of the building has limited accessibility. Adequate boundary treatment is missing and must also be accommodated around the elevated terrace in this area for safety reasons.

The car parking areas along London Road have been revised and are divided by hedge planting which assist in reducing the urbanising impact on the street scene. The verdant character along London Road must however be reinstated and new robust, large size trees planted to replace the valuable trees that unfortunately have been lost.

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