

23/0074/FFU - 29, 30 And 30A Brackendale Close**Urban Design Consultant comments****Recommendations:**

I was consulted on the initial planning application, 21/1268, which raised no principle objections from an urban design point of view.

The proposal regards the demolition of existing buildings and the redevelopment of the site with 25 unit dwellings of 2,5 storeys, including accommodation in the roof, as well as associated access, parking and landscaping at 29-30 Brackendale Close, Camberley.

The scheme has undergone a reduction in number of units from 30 to 25 apartments and consequential modest reductions in the building footprint, built form and massing, at the southwestern/southeastern and northeastern parts of the building. As a result, the distance to the neighbouring properties has increased creating a slightly more generous open space especially along the western boundary. The building footprint has been reduced from 850m² GEA to 760m² GEA. The average height of 9.9 m remains unchanged, although the height of the central part of the building has been increased to 10.7 m. The building design, which now consists of three distinct, main built elements is considered to benefit from a reduction in built form and massing, a more varied roof line and better rhythm, despite a slight height increase. The overall built form and more balanced proportions are considered an improvement from an urban design perspective. The roofscape design has been revised by the removal of a gable as well as the half hipped gable ends on the the rear elevation, which is considered positive. The proposed scheme creates the appearance of a 2.5 storey building with accommodation in the roof, which from an urban design point of view is considered acceptable in relation to the existing built and green context.

The revised layout of the scheme has removed all parking areas and bin/cycle stores from the vicinity of the Oak tree T1, an important protected tree which contributes positively to the character and appearance of the area. The relocation of the access to Portsmouth Road removes the existing vehicular accesses onto Brackendale Close and reinforces this boundary with new hedges and tree planting. This increases the visual screening from Brackendale Close into the site, and enhances the street scene character.

The new vehicular access from Portsmouth Road with parking facilities will be concentrated to the eastern side of the building. Although no objections in principle, the revised car parking area extends too far to the Northern boundary and creates a large, unrelieved hard standing area along the entire eastern side of the building. From an urban design point of view it is important to safeguard a continuous, green character along the northern boundary of the site, including the trees at the northeastern corner, as part of the overall setting of the development, in order to retain and enhance the typically verdant ambiance of the area. The car parking spaces located at the northern end of the site, Nos. 34 and 35, disrupts the Northern green boundary, especially in views from accessing the site, resulting in a lack of adequate setting for the building when approaching the building from the main access. These two car parking spaces should therefore be relocated by tweaking the car parking layout along the eastern boundary. The amount of hard standing at the eastern end of the site further requires more variation of hard landscape materials and proper detailing to reduce the perceived scale of the car park, ensure high quality design and to add visual interest in line with the Surrey Heath Residential Design Guide SPD principle 6.9. Concerns were previously raised with regards to the lack of interspersed vegetation in the car park to reduce the scale. Given the new, car parking layout, positioned along the entire front elevation, further vegetation is required to soften the impact and to create a strong sense of arrival. This can be accommodated by vertical greening which requires virtually no space.

The site is situated in an existing residential area within the defined settlement of Camberley, at the junction of Brackendale Close and Portsmouth Road (A325). With a selection of local services and public transport

within walking distance, this is considered a sustainable location. Large mature trees were valuable attributes which strongly contributed to the verdant street scene character, characteristic for this Wooded Hills Character Area, as defined in the Western Urban Area Character SPD. The Wooded Hills Character Area were initially characterized by huge Victorian/Edwardian estates in very generous landscape settings in the heathy hills and spurs of the Chobham Ridges setting. Later, dominant detached buildings in large, heavily vegetated settings in strongly enclosed street scenes, allowing only occasional glimpses of the buildings behind, became more common. Today many post-war and contemporary developments are found in the area, although some Victorian/Edwardian buildings are still retained.

The regeneration of the site for residential purpose is supported in principle from an urban design point of view, and there is no objection to the demolition of existing buildings. The scale, height, massing, layout and character of the proposed regeneration scheme is considered acceptable in principle in this generous and attractive landscaped setting.

The proposed scheme is guided by a traditional design cue, which picks up elements of the local distinctiveness in the area, benefits from well-balanced proportions, traditional built elements including half-Georgian fenestration and flat dormers, high quality materials such as red/orange brickwork, red hanging tiles, brown clay roof tiles and rustic timber, and classic details such as brick headers, quions and stone keystones.

The cycle and refuse stores are small scale, well-designed, of high quality materials, and positioned to complement the character of the development.

In summary, the proposed layout, the scale, height and massing, the high quality building design, the traditional building materials, colour scheme and fine detailing are considered to retain and enhance the existing character of the area and are subsequently supported from an urban design perspective.

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