

LOCATION: PINWOOD, 93 COLLEGE RIDE, BAGSHOT, GU19 5EP
PROPOSAL: Erection of a part three storey, part four storey 69 bedroom (Class C2) Care Home with link to and conversion of existing locally listed building from offices (Class B1a) to provide ancillary facilities to Care Home with associated landscaping, formation of access road and parking and associated works.
TYPE: Full Planning Application
APPLICANT: Darwin Developments Ltd
OFFICER: Duncan Carty

RECOMMENDATION: REFUSE

1.0 SUMMARY

- 1.1 The application proposes the conversion of a locally listed building known as Pinewood and the erection of a new linked circular building to comprise a 69 bed care home.
- 1.2 Planning permission has previously been granted for this development under SU/10/0606 against officer recommendation but this permission has expired and cannot be implemented. The site is located in the defined Countryside beyond the Green Belt wherein large development proposals are normally resisted. Whilst the planning history of the site is noted, consistent with the recommendation in 2010, officers consider that the scale of the proposed building would have an adverse impact on the countryside character.
- 1.3 The report concludes that whilst the proposal does bring benefits, particularly with respect to the preservation of the locally listed building, and the proposed care home use of the site is considered to be appropriate for this sensitively located site in close proximity to the SPA, these benefits are not considered to be so significant as to justify the scale of the proposed development and the large increase in floor space proposed, together with the loss of some visually important trees from the site. The application is therefore recommended for refusal.

2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

- 2.1 The site is located in the Countryside beyond the Green Belt adjoining the settlement area of Bagshot and adjacent to a designated Site of Nature Conservation Importance (SNCI). The Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area is located 170 metres to the north of the application site. The 2.2 hectare site is located to the north west of College Ride and is accessed via a shared driveway leading onto a private road, Pinewood Gardens.

- 2.2 The site comprises a large vacant Victorian building known as Pinewood, comprising 753 square metres in floorspace, set in landscaped grounds. The building is predominantly two storey with a later single storey addition to the east and a conservatory attached to the western flank. The building is locally listed and was last in use as offices in 2001. There are varying levels on the site with flatter more open areas around the existing building and a steep slope down to the north of the building towards wooded areas and a pond beyond. Much of the lower wooded area and the pond, fall outside the boundary of the application site. In addition to the wooded area, there are many mature trees within the open garden area and around all boundaries of the application site. These trees are protected by an area Tree Preservation Order No. 2/05.
- 2.3 Residential properties in Pinewood Gardens adjoin the southern boundary of the site and a house known as Pinewood Cottage, which shares the same access drive as Pinewood, is located to the north east. 87 and 89 College Ride lie to the east of the application site.

3.0 RELEVANT HISTORY

The application site has an extensive planning history of which the following is most relevant:

- 3.1 SU/06/0398 Change the use of the existing building from offices (Class B1a) to education (Class D1) together with extension of the existing building and associated development along with the erection of detached office building Class B1a). *Refused in February 2007.*
- 3.2 SU/06/0404 Change the use of the existing building from office to special needs school together with extensions and the erection of 15 dwelling units. *The non-determination appeal was subsequently withdrawn in March 2008.*
- 3.3 SU/07/0927 Change the use of the existing building from offices (Class B1a) to education (Class D1) together with extensions and erection of 3 detached office buildings. *Granted in February 2008.*
- 3.4 SU/10/0606 Erection of a part three storey, part four storey 69 bedroom care home (Class Cc) together with alterations and conversion of existing building to provide ancillary facilities to the care home with associated landscaping, formation of internal access and parking. *Granted in December 2010 and expired in December 2013.*

Officers recommended refusal due to the size of the development harming the rural and open character of the Countryside and the Green Belt, and due to the harm to trees. Other reasons were recommended concerning the requirement for a legal agreement to limit the impact on the SPA and a travel plan checking contribution for the County Highway Authority.

- 3.5 SU/10/0606/1 A non-material amendment to planning permission SU/10/0606 to allow some fenestration changes (increasing window heights) and alter the layout to re-position the glazed link within the circular building. *Approved in October 2012.*

4.0 THE PROPOSAL

- 4.1 The proposal is for the conversion of the existing building Pinewood and the erection of a linked circular building to comprise a 69 bed care home.
- 4.2 The refurbishment of the existing building includes the demolition of the conservatory on the south elevation and single storey extensions on the northern elevation together with minor internal alterations to provide office and visitor's rooms and communal lounges, cinema room and hairdressers on the ground floor and office/staff rooms/meeting rooms and stores on the first floor. In all other respects the existing building will be retained in its original state. No bedroom accommodation is proposed within the existing building.
- 4.3 The large circular extension which would accommodate the 69 bedrooms would be located approximately 20 metres to the north of Pinewood and would be linked to the existing building by a single storey glazed enclosed walkway, partly elevated on stilts. The new building would have three full floors of accommodation and a fourth smaller lower ground floor would accommodate kitchen, plant room, laundry, stores, staff facilities and a morgue. A total floor area of 3,420 sq m is proposed. A landscaped courtyard sitting area would be provided in the centre of the building, which would be partially roofed over.
- 4.4 The building would have a shallow mono pitched roof and would be sited so as to utilise the drop in levels on the site. The height of the building would vary from between 10m to 13m high but would be sited on a lower level of land than the existing building which varies in height from between 8.5m to 11.5 m. The circular building would be broken in part by a three storey flat roofed glazed corridor link, proposed as positioned in the NMA approval SU/10/0606/1, and a further segment of the building would project out from the main circumference of the building to provide day rooms on each of the three floors and a kitchen on the lower ground floor. The day rooms would feature long curved balconies at first and second floor level.
- 4.5 The submitted design and access statement advises that the external materials of the circular building would comprise a combination of render, brick and cedar cladding with galvanized steel roof coverings to pitched roofs. The single storey glazed corridor link would be sedum covered (grass roof).
- 4.6 Car parking would be provided in two separate areas. An amended parking layout plan has been submitted, which shows a barrier controlled staff car park of 17 spaces, located to the northern side of Pinewood and a visitor car park of 11 spaces sited to the south of the existing building. A new central circular driveway would be created to the front of Pinewood which would lead onto the existing vehicular drive and access onto Pinewood Gardens. This access currently serves Pinewood and one other private dwellinghouse.

A new delivery, fire access and bin store area would be provided to the rear of the circular care home.

- 4.7 The submitted tree survey recommends that 5 trees require to be felled for arboricultural reasons and a further 10 are required to be felled to make way for the new driveway and building. The majority of the trees to be felled are C grade trees but 4 of the trees to be felled to make way for the new building and driveway are B grade trees. Extensive new tree planting is proposed around the buildings and former hard-surfaced car parking areas to the east and west of the new care home would be removed and returned to soft landscaping.
- 4.8 In support of the application, the applicant has provided a planning statement, design and access statement, heritage statement, transport assessment (including a travel plan), tree report, flood risk assessment, ecology report, services and utilities report, needs assessment and sequential test report.
- 4.9 The needs assessment has indicated that, with an increasing elderly population, the demand for residential care that are best met within either a residential or extra-care setting will increase. Within a 5 mile catchment area, there are 1,693 bed spaces, of which 1,557 are within single rooms and of these, 824 have the benefit of en-suite facilities, which would meet best practice. The demand is expected to rise to 1,960 by 2024 and 2,259 by 2034. The sequential test identifies the available sites and whilst a number of care homes are in the pipeline, some of which are under currently construction, a demand will still arise for new care home accommodation.

5.0 CONSULTATION RESPONSES

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| 5.1 | County Highway Authority | Raises no objection. |
| 5.2 | Windlesham Parish Council | No objections, although note concern over highways access to the site. |
| 5.3 | Natural England | Raises no objection subject to the use being restricted to Cc use and for residents who are too infirm or have reduced mobility making it unlikely that they will walk around the nearby SPA and subject to other restrictions/conditions to protect the SPA. |
| 5.4 | Surrey Wildlife Trust | No comments received to date. Any formal comments will be reported to the Committee. |
| 5.5 | Local Lead Flood Authority | No comments received to date. Any formal comments will be reported to the Committee. |
| 5.6 | Arboricultural Officer | Raises an objection with respect to the loss of 3 high quality Grade B Sweet Chestnut trees which make a valuable contribution to the character of the site. He considers this tree loss to be avoidable. |

- 5.7 Conservation Advisor No objections.

6.0 REPRESENTATIONS

6.1 At the time of preparation of this report, one representation has been received in support,

- College Ride is too narrow, in effect a single lane carriageway due to on-street parking, to accommodate additional traffic and has no traffic calming facilities to reduce traffic speed, and impact on other road users (walkers/dog walkers, cyclists and horse riders) and currently experiences heavy traffic from deliveries to Pennyhill Park [See *paragraph. 7.10*]
- increased traffic congestion on surrounding road network [See *paragraph. 7.10*]
- scale of care home too large [See *paragraph. 7.4*]
- noise and pollution from increased traffic [See *paragraph. 7.7*]
- increased strain on local doctors surgeries and other amenities [*Officer comment: It is not considered that the proposal would, in itself, have any significant impact on such services*]
- impact on utilities (especially sewerage and drainage) [See *paragraph. 7.9*]
- impact on the SPA [See *paragraph 7.8*]
- impact on on-site ecology (including deer, foxes, badgers and birds) [See *paragraph. 7.8*]

7.0 PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

- 7.1 The application property relates to a locally listed building and the application site is located in the Countryside beyond the Green Belt and adjoins the Bagshot Heath Site of Nature Conservation Importance (SNCI) with the Thames Basin Heaths SPA located beyond, to the north. As such, Policies CP1, CP2, CP6, CP8, CP11, CP12, CP14, DM9, DM10, DM11, DM14 and DM17 of the Surrey Heath Core Strategy and Development Management Policies 2012 (CSDMP); Policies NRM6 of the South East Plan 2009 (as saved) (SEP) and the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). In addition, guidance within the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area Avoidance Strategy Supplementary Planning Document 2012 is relevant to the consideration of this application. The proposal relates to Class C2 development and is not CIL liable.
- 7.2 The main planning considerations in this case are considered to be:
- the principle of the development and demand for care spaces;
 - impact on the character of the area, including its designated countryside setting;

- impact on trees;
- impact on the locally listed building;
- impact on residential amenities;
- impact on ecology and the SPA;
- impact on highway safety; and
- impact on drainage.

7.3 The principle of the development and demand for care spaces

7.3.1 Policy CP8 of the CSDMP seeks to resist the loss of land in commercial uses unless the site is unsuitably located. The principle of the loss of the former office use from the existing building Pinewood, is established by the previous permission SU/10/0606, which approved the conversion of Pinewood to care home use. No objection is therefore raised to the loss of the existing office use from the premises, with the proposal complying with Policy CP8 of the CSDMP, subject to the considerations below.

7.3.2 The applicant's needs assessment has indicated that there remains an unmet demand for care home accommodation in the catchment area for the application site. Whilst some sites, indicated in the sequential test as not started are in fact under construction (for example, 12 Street Heath, Whitehill Farm and Pembroke House), an unmet demand remains. It is also noted that within the Borough, more generally, there is a lack of available housing land as set out in the Housing Land Supply Paper 2016-2021 to meet the required five year supply (and 5% buffer), for which care home development can contribute towards this deficit. However, it is not considered that the delivery of care home accommodation, would justify the harm to the Countryside setting identified in paragraph 7.4 below.

7.4 Impact on the character of the area and its Countryside setting

7.4.1 Paragraph 17 of the NPPF sets out the core land-use planning principles that should underpin decision-making. These include the recognition of the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside along with the effective use of land by reusing land that has been previously developed. Policy CP1 of the CSDMP indicates that new development will come forward largely from previously developed land in the western part of the Borough, and development in the Countryside should not result in the coalescence of settlements. Paragraph 5.6 of the CSDMP indicates:

"Inappropriate development within the Countryside will include proposals that cause harm to its intrinsic character and beauty, landscape diversity, heritage and wildlife. In considering proposals for development regard will be had to national guidance as appropriate."

Policy CP2 of the CSDMP requires new development to ensure that all land is

efficiently used within the context of its surroundings and respect and enhance the quality of the urban, rural, natural and historic environments. Policy DM9 of the CSDMP also indicates that new development should respect and enhance the local, natural or historic character of the environment.

- 7.4.2 Whilst the site is previously developed land, the majority of the site remains open and, although in a relatively unkempt state, the site has a parkland setting. Behind the existing application building, the land is open and relatively undeveloped, principally woodland.
- 7.4.3 The new building would be three full storeys with a fourth half floor which would extend over 50 metres into the undeveloped part of the site at the rear. Whilst the extension would sit into the lower land level on the site, the four storey element of the building would be some 13m in height. The building would comprise a total gross floorspace of 3420 sq m., providing an extension with a 350% increase in floorspace, over the existing provision.
- 7.4.4 It is noted that previous permissions allowed the development of new offices and extensions to Pinewood (now expired), and indeed the current proposal has been granted permission under SU/10/0606 (and subsequent NMA permission SU/10/0606/1), but against officer advice at that time. It is noted that application SU/10/0606 was assessed against local policies (for the 2000 local plan) restricting development within the countryside (beyond the Green Belt) which have been deleted, but replaced with the national policy in the NPPF, as set out above. However, it is considered that the current proposal would provide a significant addition to the host building and spread a large form of development into the undeveloped part of the site.
- 7.4.5 The applicant has indicated in the submitted planning statement that the proposal would provide a *"more compact building which is sited to take advantage of the change in levels across the site. In effect this will result in less impact on the adjacent Locally Listed building Pinewood and the openness of the surrounding countryside."* Furthermore, the applicant goes on to explain that the design of the extension has been led by the needs and space standards required of a modern care home and also to be sympathetic to Pinewood. Whilst, as it is noted in paragraph 7.6 below, the proposal is acceptable in terms of its impact on the locally listed building, and that the relationship between the existing building and its extension is improved by the physical separation in between; this spread of development and the size, mass and increased floorspace, would have an urbanising impact, detrimental to its countryside setting and openness.
- 7.4.6 The site is fairly isolated and some distance from residential properties to the west and south, but dwellings are sited close by to the east and north and one property, Pinewood Cottage shares the access drive and will pass the new development to gain access to that property. In addition, there would be regular visitors to the care home. As such, the development would be clearly visible in the public domain and whilst the drop in land level helps to conceal some of the bulk and height of the building when viewed in a northerly direction, the full height and scale of the building would be apparent when viewed from the north in a southerly direction. Furthermore, the corridor link will add to the visual impact of the development. It is concluded that the scale and height of the new building would

give rise to a detrimental impact on the openness and character of its rural surroundings. As such the development would have a significant adverse visual harm, failing to preserve and enhance the countryside setting, which would be contrary to Policies CP3 and DM9 of the CSDMP and the NPPF.

7.5 Impact on trees

- 7.5.1 Trees on the application site are protected by area Tree Preservation Order No. 2/05. The proposal would result in the loss of three Category B sweet chestnut trees which make a significant visual contribution to the local environment and could not be moved due to their size and close proximity to one another. This loss cannot be compensated and this tree loss is considered to be unacceptable by the Council's Tree Officer. A similar conclusion to this proposed loss was drawn by the Tree Officer at the time of the determination of SU/10/0909. As such, an objection is raised on these grounds, with the proposal failing to respect and enhance the local, natural or historic character of the environment, and therefore failing to comply with Policy DM9 of the CSDMP.

7.6 Impact on the locally listed building

- 7.6.1 Policy DM17 of the CSDMP seeks to conserve heritage assets and the historic environment and advises that wherever possible, heritage assets should be put to an appropriate and viable use. The Heritage Statement concludes that the application proposals will have minimal impact on the original dwelling. The proposal includes the removal of three extensions which are later additions. These later additions are unattractive and in a poor state of repair. The new building has been designed to minimise the impact on the setting of Pinewood. It would be located some distance away and to the rear such that the new structure will be obscured behind the original house. No objections are raised by the Council's Conservation Adviser and it is concluded that the proposal is acceptable in terms of its impact on the locally listed building, complying with Policy DM17 of the CSDMP.

7.7 Impact on residential amenities.

- 7.7.1 The nearest residential dwellings to the development are located to the north and east alongside the access drive some 15 metres to 20 metres away. There is a dense rhododendron/shrub screening between these properties and the site, which largely conceals views into the site. The application proposes considerably reduced parking on the site and the removal of a former car park area sited close to these residential boundaries. Given the nature of the proposed use, it is likely that outside space/gardens will only have limited usage and noise levels generated from its use and, also from the low traffic movements expected. The proposal is therefore considered to be acceptable in terms of its impact on the amenities of adjoining residents and therefore complies with Policy DM9 of the CSDMP.

7.8 Impact on ecology and the SPA

- 7.8.1 The SNCI and SSSI/SPA immediately adjoin the wooded area of land to the north of the application site boundary i.e. under 400m away. Natural England advises that provided the use falls within use class C and on the understanding that the residents are too infirm and/or have reduced mobility making it unlikely that they

will walk around the SPA, then it would not raise objection subject to the imposition of the following restrictions:

- All staff, residents and visitors to be provided with an Information Pack providing details of the fragility of the SPA;
- No self-contained staff/resident accommodation;
- Measures put in place to prevent organised trips to the SPA;
- A pet restriction to preclude the keeping of cats and dogs on the premises;
- Measures to ensure the car park cannot be available to the general public; and
- Signage indicating that there is no public access to the SPA from the site.

It is considered that these matters could be controlled by conditions, if the Council were minded to approve the proposal. As such, no objections are raised to the proposal on its impact on the integrity of the SPA.

7.8.2 Natural England also advises that given the development is so close to the SPA/SSSI boundary certain measures must be in place to limit pollution, dust, disturbance and other impacts during construction works, on the protected areas. These matters could also be secured by a method of construction condition.

7.8.3 For the previous application SU/10/0606, the Surrey Wildlife Trust requested a hydrology statement and a drainage scheme to indicate that the surrounding habitat is not adversely affected by either changes in water flow or adverse changes in water quality. It also seeks a landscape management plan and further reptile and bat surveys to be undertaken with proposed mitigation where required. Previous survey work has identified the presence of bats in the existing building and as such a European Protected Species Licence would be required to be obtained. The Trust also recommended certain biodiversity enhancements within the site. These matters can be secured by condition.

7.8.4 No objections are therefore raised on ecological grounds, with the proposal complying with Policy CP14 of the CSDMP; Policy NRM6 of the SEP; the NPPF and advice within the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area Avoidance Strategy SPD 2012.

7.9 Impact on highway safety

7.9.1 The submitted transport assessment concludes that the proposal would result in a significant decrease in peak hour and daily movements when compared to the previous use of the site. The use also gives rise to a much reduced on-site parking requirement. A total of 28 spaces is proposed, complying with parking standards, compared with the previous use demand of 81 spaces. A travel plan is also proposed to encourage staff to use alternative forms of transport and reduce reliance on the car.

7.9.2 The County Highway Authority has raised no objections to the proposal and it is concluded that the proposed use, delivering a lower traffic demand than the authorised use, could be safely accommodated on the local highway network. The reduced level of traffic generation associated with the proposed care home use

does not therefore give rise to a highway safety concern.

- 7.9.3 As such, no objections are raised on highway safety grounds, with the proposal complying with Policies CP11 and DM11 of the CSDMP.

7.10 Impact on drainage

- 7.10.1 The proposal relates to a site which falls within Zone 1, i.e. having a low flood risk. The comments of the LLFA are awaited and, subject to their comments and the requirements previously indicated by the Surrey Wildlife Trust (as indicated in Paragraph 7.8.3 above), no objections are raised on these grounds, with the proposal complying with Policy DM10 of the CSDMP.

8.0 CONCLUSION

- 8.1 Whilst it is acknowledged that this proposal would bring about certain benefits, particularly with respect to conservation of the locally listed building and reduced areas of hard-surfacing on the site, these benefits must be weighed against the dis-benefits of the scheme, in respect of the scale and height of the building and the subsequent detrimental impact on the openness and character and appearance of the countryside, contrary to policies in the CSDMP and the NPPF. The justification put forward by the applicant, that there is a need to provide for current and predicted demand for care bed spaces in the Borough, is not considered to be so overwhelming as to justify overturning countryside policy in this case.
- 8.2 In addition, the proposal would entail the loss of some important high quality trees on the site, contrary to Policy DM9 of the CSDMP.
- 8.3 The application is therefore recommended for refusal.

9.0 ARTICLE 2(3) DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT PROCEDURE (AMENDMENT) ORDER 2012 WORKING IN A POSITIVE/PROACTIVE MANNER

In assessing this application, officers have worked with the applicant in a positive and proactive manner consistent with the requirements of paragraphs 186-187 of the NPPF. This included the following:-

- a) Provided or made available pre application advice to seek to resolve problems before the application was submitted and to foster the delivery of sustainable development.
- b) Provided feedback through the validation process including information on the website, to correct identified problems to ensure that the application was correct and could be registered.

c) Have proactively communicated with the applicant through the process to advise progress, timescale or recommendation.

10.0 RECOMMENDATION

REFUSE for the following reason(s):-

1. The proposal, by reason of its height, mass, significant increase in floorspace and spread of development across the site would give rise to a quantum of built form which would have a harmful urbanising impact on the openness and the intrinsic rural character of the countryside, contrary to Policies CP1, CP2 and DM9 of the Surrey Heath Core Strategy and Development Management Policies 2012 and the National Planning Policy Framework.
2. The proposed development entails the removal of a group of three preserved sweet chestnut trees (protected by Tree Preservation Order No. 02/05) which make a significant visual contribution to the environment and the site. The loss of these trees would give rise to a detrimental impact on the visual amenity and character of the locality, contrary to Policy DM9 of the Surrey Heath Core Strategy and Development Management Policies 2012 and the National Planning Policy Framework.