

TWC/2020/0446

Site of Haughmond Court & Apley Court, Dothill, Telford, Shropshire
Demolition of Apley Court and erection of Extra Care Facility containing 81 no. one and two bedroom self-contained apartments (Use Class C2) and associated communal / public facilities, with associated access and landscape works

APPLICANT

The Wrekin Housing Trust

RECEIVED

04/09/2020

PARISH

Wellington

WARD

Dothill

THIS APPLICATION HAS BEEN CALLED TO COMMITTEE AT THE REQUEST OF CLLR KAREN TOMLINSON

Online planning file: <https://secure.telford.gov.uk/planning/pa-applicationssummary.aspx?ApplicationNumber=TWC/2020/0446>

1. SUMMARY RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1.1 It is recommended that **DELEGATED AUTHORITY** be granted to the Development Management Service Delivery Manager to **GRANT FULL PLANNING PERMISSION** subject to conditions and informatives.

2. APPLICATION SITE

- 2.1 The site is located in Dothill towards the north western edge of the built up area of Telford. The site sits within a residential area, comprising a mix of single and two storey dwellings off Severn Drive to the immediate west, Eyton View to the north and Minsterley Close to the south and east. The Dothill Local Nature Reserve is beyond this residential setting to the west, and the secondary Charlton School beyond to the east. The Brooklands Local Centre is located approximately 0.7 miles to the south west of the site, and a convenience store 0.3 miles on Tern Way to the south.
- 2.2 The site measures 0.7ha comprising the nine storey Apley Court on the northern portion, accommodating 51 supported living flats owned and managed by the Wrekin Housing Trust (WHT).
- 2.3 The southern half consists of car parking, an electricity substation (proposed to be relocated within the site) and soft landscaped areas, including a grassed area which held the former nine storey Haughmond Court, this again contained supported living accommodation totalling 52 units, the block was demolished in 2015 and the site has remained vacant since. This area of the site sits at a slightly elevated ground level to Apley Court.

- 2.4 The wider land ownership of WHT includes a series of modern bungalows comprising Minsterley Close and Dee Close wrapping around the eastern and southern edge of the site.

3. APPLICATION DETAILS

- 3.1 Full planning permission is sought for an 81 unit Extra Care Facility owned and operated by Wrekin Housing Trust on a social rented basis, comprising 38no. one bedroom and 43no. two bedroom apartments. A ground floor café, lounge area and hairdressers for use by residents and members of the public would be provided and termed the Community Hub; with buggy store, ancillary office accommodation, laundry and plant. The accommodation is proposed to be delivered across each floor, comprising a mass of five and six storey heights (at the northern Apley Court end) which are shown to alter across the site depending on the changing site levels.
- 3.2 The site is proposed to be brought forward in two phases. Phase one on the former Haughmond Court site is proposed to deliver 45 one and two bed apartments along with the Community Hub. Wrekin Housing Trust's tenants at Apley Court would be given the opportunity to relocate to the new development in the first instance. If they did not wish to take up this proposal, they would be found other suitable accommodation by The Trust.
- 3.3 Once Apley Court had been vacated it would be demolished and phase two constructed providing a further 36 one and two bed apartments. Due to the site level difference phase two incorporates a lower ground floor comprising six apartments. The demolished and existing accommodation are no longer fit for purpose. Each proposed apartment will have a private patio area at ground floor or a balcony area to all upper level floors.
- 3.4 The existing access point off Severn Drive into Minsterley Close will be retained, with removal of the existing second access off Severn Drive into the Apley Court parking area. An existing Public Right of Way running across the site from Severn Drive to Whitchurch Road proposed to be stopped-up and relocated to maintain a pedestrian link. The Extra Care would be served by a series of parking bays around the eastern and southern perimeter with a number fronting the bungalows on Minsterley Close.
- 3.5 The application is accompanied by a Design & Access Statement, Planning Statement, Transport Statement, Travel Plan, Arboricultural Report, Ecological Report, Sustainability Principles document, and a Quantum of Development Overview.

4. RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

Covering the outer edges of the site:

- 4.1 TWC/2016/0786 Erection of 12no. bungalows, creation of access and parking spaces. Full Granted 10/11/2016 – Minsterley Close and Dee Close (south)
- 4.2 TWC/2014/0467 Erection of 19no. dwellings with associated landscaping and parking. Full Granted 01/12/2014 – (Minsterley Close east and south-east)

Pre-application enquiry:

- 4.3 PE/2018/0464 Erection of Extra Care Housing scheme (81no. units)

5. RELEVANT POLICY DOCUMENTS

- 5.1 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)
- 5.2 Telford & Wrekin Local Plan 2011-2031

6. NEIGHBOUR REPRESENTATIONS

- 6.1 A total of 48 neighbour representations have been received to the consultation (neighbour notification, press notice and site notice) raising the following summarised issues:

- Removal of TPO'd trees
- Overdevelopment - imposing height, loss of greenspace around previous blocks and setback from Severn Drive
- Extra traffic and parking
- Insufficient infrastructure in the locality
- Loss of privacy
- Lack of consultation with current residents / timing of application during Covid 'lockdown' / requirement for longer consultation.

7. STATUTORY REPRESENTATIONS (SUMMARISED)

- 7.1 Cllr K. Tomlinson
Call-in request, and online representation:
 - Development too close to the road - previous development and existing development sit back from Severn Drive

- Removal of trees which have TPO's, even though they will be replaced they will not be 50 year old mature trees, contrary to Policy NE2, Ash may be immune to Ash dieback, overriding of TPO
- Overdevelopment - the layout and density of the proposed planning application is larger than the previous building which was demolished, majority of new build by the Housing Trust are 1 to 2 stories high, which surely is safer for the older generation in case of fire, already been bungalows built on green areas and the garages knocked down and replaced by more bungalows, contrary to Policy BE1.

7.2 Wellington Town Council: Comment - No objection in principle: However the Committee had reservations in relation to the impact on the transport infrastructure in the area with the previous and ongoing developments and further suggested that a mini-roundabout should be provided at the top of the Old Whitchurch Road at the junction of North Road and the Committee felt that the provision of this mini-roundabout would ease traffic movements and enhance the general traffic safety within the locality.

7.3 Highways, Arboricultural, Ecology and Healthy Spaces – Support subject to conditions

7.4 Shropshire Wildlife Trust: Object

- ecological report recommends all mature tree should be retained as they are of ecological importance on this site
- retention of larger TPO'd trees having been TPO'd for a reason, no sign of ash dieback T17 and T18, suggesting disease resistant and highly valuable, high wildlife and amenity value of trees, water retention value of trees and flooding more likely without
- crown maintenance T5 and T6 better.

7.5 Shropshire Fire Service and West Mercia Police – Comment standard informative requested.

APPRAISAL

8.1 Having regard to the development plan policy and other material considerations including comments received during the consultation process, the planning application raises the following main issues:

- Principle of development
- Design and impact on the amenity of adjacent properties
- Trees and Ecology
- Highways impacts

- Drainage
- Other matters

Principle of development

- 8.2 The site sits within a residential context, and has established continuous residential use. Whilst an Extra Care Facility sits within Use Class C2 (Residential institutions), it shares many characteristics with a Use Class C3 (Dwellinghouses) and is considered suitable in a wider residential context as relevant here. Within the Borough there is a sustained need for the provision of specialist residential accommodation through Extra Care provision (identified here as relating to residents over 55 years). The proposal is a modern replacement of the existing accommodation that is for retirement purposes rather than unrestricted occupancy. The existing accommodation already benefits from the feature of a shared lounge provision, and its replacement with fit for purpose accommodation is considered acceptable in principle.
- 8.3 The site is in close proximity to the Dothill Local Nature Reserve as a recreational resource, a convenience store and a nearby Local Centre, the scheme further incorporates a number of community facilities for the benefit of residents and the public. The closest bus stops to the proposed development are located on the site frontage, and are served by the no.16 bus service operated by Arriva Midlands between Monday and Saturday. This provides four services per day running between Telford Town Centre and Rodington (including drop off and picks ups across Wellington). The scheme is compliant with TWLP Policy HO7ii. which requires specialist housing development to be in close proximity to community and support facilities, shops and services, and public transport connections.
- 8.4 The layout and functions evident meet the specific needs of residents. This includes provision of a central hub to deliver a flexible multi-use space for social activity, serving the Extra Care development, the wider WHT presence in the immediate locality and the existing local community.
- 8.5 The proposals incorporate a buggy store, lift provision, tiled wet rooms, amenity areas of a communal and private form, all areas are to be fully wheelchair accessible, with adequate turning areas, door widths and DDA compliant thresholds. It is advised that the interior décor and colour scheme would also be developed to assist with the easy recognition between different floors and spaces and promote a 'home from home' ambiance for Extra Care residents. The LPA is satisfied that the requirements of TWLP Policy HO7i. have been met through the proposal, with the principle of development considered acceptable.

Design and impact on the amenity of adjacent properties

- 8.6 The development entails a substantial building standing at five and six storeys in an otherwise low level residential setting. Had this application stemmed from a previously undeveloped site, then the baseline for the proposal would be substantially different from the present context of two nine storey apartment blocks (one having been demolished).
- 8.7 The development would comprise a T-shape building with a kink in the middle. It would measure 46m wide at the southern end representing its widest point (including the overhang from the roof), approximately 77m in length, approximately 18m high relating to the six storey element and 15.6m to the five storey element. The proposed layout has been greatly influenced by the existing road layout along Minsterley Close which serves the adjacent bungalows, but also the need to retain Apley Court during the construction of the first proposed phase allowing residents to move home only once, from Apley Court into the new development before commencement of phase two.
- 8.8 These constraints in conjunction with the level difference across the site (dropping 2.5 metres from the access point off Minsterley Close to the south and Eyton View to the north), and the desire to locate the Community Hub in a prominent accessible position, have greatly influenced the resulting building and site layout.
- 8.9 The building line is of a different form to the existing and historic context of the site. It largely steps forward to that of the former Haughmond Court, and partially to the main bulk (excluding the single storey lounge) of Apley Court reflective of its different mass. The reason behind this is a combination of the quantum of development required to make the scheme work in a viable form for WHT, the aforementioned need for a phased approach, and the function of the building with a reduction in height, but increase in footprint.
- 8.10 A drawing showing the separation distances to properties off Severn Drive demonstrates a minimum of 33.4m applies, and is above the 27.5m for 3 storeys and above developments where relating to new and existing properties, and provides a sufficient separation distance. At the ground floor existing hedges will be retained, alongside a number of retained and new trees, and a wildflower meadow area. Notably at the southern and northern ends where the distances to properties on Severn Drive are the lesser than 33m but more than 27.5m, there is a reduced emphasis on glazing. At the southern end where the shortest distance applies (approximately 33.4m), there are single windows serving each of the two apartments these are not of a full height form as is the case across the remainder of the elevation, and serve dining areas.

- 8.11 The LPA are mindful that the provision of balconies dotted across the elevation onto Severn Drive is a step change from the 'standard' windows as present on the front of Apley Court, although that does have balconies with solid balustrades on the side elevation facing Minsterley Close. However the former Haughmond Court did include recessed, brick enclosed balconies on the elevation facing onto Severn Drive, and prior to its demolition neighbours would have been used to the balconies and a less traditional domestic context.
- 8.12 With the exception of the south western corner, the balconies are positioned on the setback sections of the building with 40+ metres separation applying. A greater level of privacy protection has been secured with obscure glazing across the elevation together with privacy screens. With this combination, balanced with the historic context the LPA is satisfied that the amenity of neighbours on Severn Drive can be adequately protected in accordance with TWLP BE1.
- 8.13 On the southern and eastern sides relating to the new bungalows off Minsterley Close owned and operated by WHT, the building line would be setback from the demolished Haughmond Court, and the existing Apley Court. Sufficient separation distance in line with best practice is secured to the eastern side, with an evergreen hedge and additional tree planting to provide betterment at the ground floor. Along the southern side this has not been achieved standing at approximately 15.5m. Here specific factors to the determination of the adjacent bungalow development are pertinent, falling under application TWC/2014/0467. The delegated report of this application identifies the existence of both Haughmond and Apley Court as present at the time of determination, and are shown on the plans relating to proximity between the bungalow and tower block developments.
- 8.14 The report makes clear an intention for further redevelopment of the wider land parcel in WHT ownership with reference to a larger retirement development that will with time be extended onto Haughmond Court. The report references provision of a shadow diagram assessment relating to Haughmond Court identifying that the tower would not overshadow the bungalows between 10am and 2pm, and the quality of living accommodation was considered acceptable for this reason. Hence the issue of proximity was taken into consideration at the point of determination.
- 8.15 Through the current application, an element of improvement is proposed through stepping back of the south eastern corner of the new build, and a shadow assessment was required for the new development and confirms no worsening from that referenced above.
- 8.16 At the ground floor this is set at a slightly lower level to the nearest bungalows opposite with intervening landscaping to the nearest ones, with no balconies

at the south eastern corner; obscure glazing and privacy screens would then be installed for balconies across the remainder of the elevation.

- 8.17 However it must be borne in mind that the adjacent redevelopment of the wider site was fully considered during the approval of the bungalows, all of which is in the control of WHT. Furthermore the scheme represents a reduction in the height of the building, and therefore its prominence, and whilst it would have been preferable to further improve the situation, this has not been possible due to the constraints outlined but nonetheless the development is acceptable.
- 8.18 The design of the building demonstrates a clear effort to reduce its mass through the articulation of the elevations, the stepping back of the upper floor, overhanging elements of the roofscape and a varied materials pallet. The external colour of the lift has been amended from a fairly bright red to a softer copper tone at the request of Officers.
- 8.19 A glazed link has been provided between the two phases, appreciating that former presence of two tower blocks and provides some relief to a substantial linear building.
- 8.20 Provision of two signs only is shown on the proposed elevations, with no further provision suggested by the site or landscaping plans. There is a need for sensitive signage, balancing clear way marking for a building that will afford community access to specific facilities contained within it – particularly when the main entrance is proposed off Minsterley Close, and the domestic setting within which it sits. This would be subject to further control.
- 8.21 Officers consider the proposal to represent an on balance position relating to its design, and impact on the amenity of neighbours. The site would continue to be characterised by a substantial scale of building, as required to provide the necessary level of development, in an otherwise low level context. This is done in an alternative way which seeks to mitigate the scale and mass of the building, including the influence of the topography of the site, that through the removal of a particularly dated form of development, will enhance the quality of the local built environment backed by a softer developed edge, and will not prejudice or undermine existing surrounding uses as required by TWLP Policy BE1.

Trees and Ecology

- 8.22 A series of trees and hedgerows are set within the soft landscaping along the western frontage to Severn Drive and bordering the neighbouring residential development of Eyton View to the north, a number of which are subject to a TPO. The proposed site plan indicates the removal of seven trees due to proximity of the new building, encroachment of the roots by the new terrace,

these are subject to a TPO (T5, T6, T15, T16, T17, T18 and T21), together with an element of hedging (G12 Lawson cypress group, with H13 Viburnum, and SG14 Mixed shrubs).

- 8.23 A review of the proposal by TWC Arboriculture confirms that Trees 5 & 6 are generally hidden from the wider views by the more established T3 & T4, a Cherry and Norway maple. T3 & T4 are to remain. Both T5 & T6 were categorised as 'B' (Moderate quality or value >20yrs safe life) in relation to the accompanying BS 5837 survey. T5's diameter at breast height (DBH) was 44cm's. T6 measured 38cm's. T15 is a small Norway maple which has a DBH of 24cm's, categorised as 'B'. T16 is a dead tree and was once a Norway maple, which was rated 'U' (<10yrs safe life or should be removed for sound arboricultural reasons). T17 & T18 are Ash trees that are showing signs of Chalara 'Ash die back' they have DBH of 24 & 28 centimetres, both categorised as 'B' but, given they have Chalara is it unlikely they would survive the next 5 years. T21 is a Cherry that has been categorised as a 'B' and had a DBH of 49cm.
- 8.24 To mitigate the loss of the seven TPO'd trees the applicant has proposed to plant 17 new trees within the scheme. These have been specified as extra heavy standards measuring 14 -16 cm's girth. However, to make an instant impact upon the street scene it has been agreed that the applicant will increase the size of the tree plantings to semi mature trees measuring 20 – 25 cm girth. This will need to be substantiated with a new landscaping plan which can be conditioned.
- 8.25 The 'Detailed Landscape Proposal Plan' Drawing No. 19-053-01 Rev A, shows that 3 Prunus 'Sunset boulevard' are proposed to be planted in a planting pit to the south west corner of the new building on Minsterley Close, sandwiched between the building, a patio area and some block paved car parking spaces. The planting pit specification is referred to on Section 7 of the landscaping, this will need to be elaborated upon by a planting pit 'design' plan and photographic evidence taken upon installation of the pit and the trees. The above statement is also applicable to the 3x Prunus avium 'Plena' also proposed to be planted along Minsterley Close and again can be controlled through condition.
- 8.26 The loss of the trees is key to the balancing of considerations for this proposal. The largely TPO'd trees entailed were designated to secure their ongoing protection, and the multitude of functions they perform as raised in local representation is appreciated. TWLP Policy NE2 necessitates that proposals involving felling or removal of trees and hedgerows being normally resisted unless acceptable mitigation measures can be secured, with the wider benefits of the scheme needing to outweigh the loss with an economic

viability factor entailed, the provision of integrated replacement and enhancement planting.

- 8.27 As previously highlighted, the proposal provides a specialist form of accommodation where a continued need remains, the application advises that the scheme provides the density necessary to enable the redevelopment of this site to be sustainable for affordable units under the management of The Wrekin Housing Trust, with the need for a phased approach to construction. The application proposes mitigation for the loss of existing trees which subject to the stipulations of more mature provision from the off, thus shortening the time period by which the trees are equivalent to that lost through development, provides an overall betterment and is supported in line with TWLP Policy NE2. During the course of the application, the line of the terrace has also been redrawn to avoid encroachment to the RPA of the retained TPO'd T19 on the western edge.
- 8.28 The application is accompanied by an Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey describing the habitats present on site - buildings, mature trees and hedgerows and areas of grassland - as having low biodiversity value, although the trees and hedgerows have potential to support nesting birds and the site has some value for foraging and commuting bats. No potential roost features have been identified relating to the trees and buildings present, with a control around lighting to ensure it is appropriately designed to minimise illumination around the site boundaries.
- 8.29 Dothill Local Nature Reserve is within 100m of the proposed development but separated by existing areas of residential development, no potential effect pathways have been identified by which the development of the site will impact upon the Local Nature Reserve.
- 8.30 Subject to securing enhancement through the strategic placement of bat and bird boxes, the aforementioned control around lighting (which should also have regard to the amenity of neighbours), Officers are content that the biodiversity value of the site and its surroundings will not be negatively impacted upon by the proposal in accordance with TWLP Policy NE1.

Highways

- 8.31 The application is accompanied by a Transport Statement which includes traffic count details and vehicle trip generation data. Notably the site benefits from access to a bus service in the locality linking to the centre of Wellington and Telford Town Centre across the majority of the week, with a direct pedestrian link from the site frontage to the bus stops. Review of this evidence and the context of the site, has not raised concern from the Local Highways

Authority (LHA) as to the impact of the development on the local highways network, and acknowledging the request for a new mini roundabout from Wellington Town Council.

- 8.32 Regarding parking, a total of 52 spaces are proposed to serve the Extra Care Facility including seven disabled spaces, as well as ambulance parking at the southern side. These are placed around the perimeter of the building and its landscaping. With reference to the Local Plan parking standards, the proposed development sits within the classification of retirement homes and sheltered housing, requiring 1 space per 2 units, and 1 space per 1 staff. The applicant has suggested that a maximum of 6no. staff are present on shift at any one time, and as such this informs a requirement of 46 spaces.
- 8.33 Further to this, the LHA note that the proposals include a small area of A1 and A3 community uses. Whilst it is acknowledged that these uses are ancillary to the extra care facility itself, it is likely that these facilities will attract some external business. The LP parking standards would require an additional 13 spaces based upon the Gross Floor Areas of the proposed community uses. With the ancillary nature of these uses in mind, it is considered reasonable in this instance that a further 6 spaces are provided to serve the development to cater for the proposed community uses. In summary, the LHA has requested a total of 52 spaces, which have been provided on the revised planning layout.
- 8.34 Many of the car parking spaces included within the application red edge are already as existing, with some fronting the existing bungalows along Minsterley Close. The applicant has confirmed in writing that these spaces are not legally connected to the bungalows and do not form part of the resident's tenancy agreements; it is important to note that the residual parking left for the existing bungalows meets the TWLP parking standards. There is however a need for the highlighted spaces to be identified as being associated with the extra care for the avoidance of doubt, this would be subject to specific control measures. Having regard to the above, the LPA is satisfied that the scheme accords with the requirements of TWLP Policies C3 and C5.

Drainage

- 8.35 The application proposes that foul drainage will be conveyed to mains sewer, and surface water to a sustainable drainage system albeit the arrangement as it stands is through below ground provision, whereby a development of this size would be expected to provide above ground multi-functional SuDS in accordance with sustainable drainage principles for water quality treatment, amenity and biodiversity and in accordance with Telford's SuDS Handbook. Alternative approaches can be considered through a detailed drainage design

controlled through condition, thus ensuring compliance with TWLP Policies ER11 and ER12.

Other Matters

8.36 The form of consultation undertaken by the applicant has been raised, whilst the LPA encourages prior engagement of residents to the submission of a planning application, it has no jurisdiction over its form. The timing of the application during lockdown with limited awareness for residents due to not obtaining newspapers or having access to the internet has been identified as a cause for concern, and a need for a longer consultation period due to Covid-19. Again the LPA has no influence as to the timing of a submission where the validation requirements are satisfied, here national Government did not halt the operation of the planning system due to the pandemic. Consultation arrangements were compliant with the requirements in place at the time, with an extension to receipt of consultation comments agreed, and confirmation provided that representation can be made to the point of determination.

9. CONCLUSIONS

9.1 The proposal represents a substantial form of development in a low level residential setting. The existing context of a large scale development standing at nine storeys, and a further parallel block having been present but since demolished, is key to the acceptability of a wider and stepped forward development towards Severn Drive. Sufficient separation distances are secured in this direction, with mitigation measures in place to minimise any loss of privacy across the scheme. The mass and form of the development is reflective of the new function of the building entailed. A number of TPO'd trees would be lost in order to facilitate the development, based on the need for phased delivery and the quantum of development necessary to make the scheme viable, this loss is unfortunate but has not raised objection from TWC Arboriculture on the basis of a betterment overall. The proposal is therefore deemed to be compliant with the Telford & Wrekin Local Plan 2011-2031 and the guidance contained within the NPPF.

10. DETAILED RECOMMENDATION

10.1 Based on the conclusions above, the recommendation to the Planning Committee on this application is to **FULL GRANT PLANNING PERMISSION** subject to the following conditions (with authority to finalise conditions and reasons for approval to be delegated to Development Management Service Delivery Manager):-

1. Time Limit - Full

2. Materials samples
3. Drainage – foul and surface water
4. Details of means of physical identification of parking adjacent to the bungalows along Minsterley Close
5. Design and construction details highway works associated with creation of parking spaces and rerouting of the highway footway
6. Tree Protection Plan (amended)
7. Landscape Design and TPO tree replacement – Planting details and scheme (alternative girth, species, and pit details)
8. Landscape Management Plan
9. SEMP
10. Lighting Plan (Ecology and Residential Amenity)
11. Erection of artificial nesting/roosting boxes
12. Parking, Loading, Unloading and Turning
13. Development in accordance with approved plans (no approval of landscaping plan, drainage plans)
14. Restricted Use - Extra Care Facility.