

BRECKLAND COUNCIL

DEVELOPMENT CONTROL COMMITTEE 19TH MAY 2008

REPORT OF DEVELOPMENT SERVICES MANAGER

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NORTH TUDDENHAM: PROPOSED 40 BED NURSING HOME, ADJACENT THE LODGE, MAIN ROAD

APPLICANT: Express Care Ltd REFERENCE: 3PL/2008/0321/F

<p>SUMMARY – This report concerns a proposal for a 40 bedroom nursing home at North Tuddenham. It is recommended that permission is granted subject to conditions.</p>

1. INTRODUCTION

This report concerns a planning application for a 40 bedroom residential nursing home in the village of North Tuddenham. The nursing home would comprise a range of linked single and two storey buildings of broadly traditional design. A new access and car park would be created off Norwich Road, adjacent to the existing pub car park. A service access is proposed off Elsing Lane. The application is supported by a Planning Design & Access Statement, Travel Plan and Employment Report and Demographics Report.

The site is located on the northern fringe of the village, in an area of sporadic development. The site comprises a broadly rectangular parcel of land, extending to approximately 0.6 hectare. The site is adjoined by a public house and a working farm, but is otherwise surrounded by open countryside.

2. KEY DECISION

This is not a key decision.

3. COUNCIL PRIORITIES

The following Council priorities are relevant to this report:

- A safe and healthy environment
- A well planned place to live and work

4. POLICY

National planning policy set out in PPS 1, PPS 7 and PPG 13 is relevant to the application.

The application site lies outside the Settlement Boundary for North Tuddenham, as defined in the Local Plan

5. PLANNING HISTORY

Outline planning permission was granted for a 40 bedroom motel on the site in February 2002. This permission was renewed in May 2005.

Planning permission for a 62 bedroom nursing home was refused in April 2007 on policy grounds and because of potential conflicts with the adjacent pub and farm.

6. CONSULTATIONS

North Tuddenham Parish Council has objection to the application. Concerns raised relate to the effect of the development on rural character, the lack of facilities in the village, conflicts with adjacent businesses and drainage problems.

Highway Authority has raised concerns about visibility from the proposed access and about the lack of pedestrian and public transport facilities in the area.

Environment Agency has raised no objection.

The Council's Environmental Health Officer has raised no objection to the application.

At the time of writing, 13 letters of objection had been received from local residents. Concerns raised relate to the effect of the development on rural character, the lack of facilities in the village, conflicts with adjacent businesses, drainage problems, possible future development and increased traffic.

7. ASSESSMENT

The principal planning issues raised by the proposed development relate to: i) planning policy for development outside settlement boundaries, ii) the visual impact of the development on the surrounding rural landscape, and iii) the relationship of the development to adjacent uses.

Policy

National planning policy seeks generally to direct new development in rural areas to existing towns and villages, particularly local service centres. When assessed against the criteria for sustainable development set out in PPS 7 and PPS 1, the proposal does not perform well, due to the relatively isolated location of the application on the fringe of a small village with few local services and the limited accessibility of the site other than by car. However, a number of relevant factors must be weighed against the general policy strictures on new development here.

Firstly, on the question of the need for the development, the applicant contends that, with an increasing population of elderly people, there is an unmet demand for additional nursing homes in the area. In support of this argument, reference is made to demographic information, and to the existing provision of residential and nursing care beds.

Secondly, the applicant contends that a rural location is advantageous for the type of nursing care proposed here. Whilst it is accepted that locations with towns and villages with good access to services are well-suited to residential care homes, it is suggested that a more tranquil setting away from general disturbance is more beneficial for nursing care home patients. The proposed nursing home is intended specifically to provide EMI nursing care for frail elderly people suffering from dementia and other mental illnesses.

Finally, in recognition of the limited transport options available, the applicant has put forward various travel plan proposals, including the provision of a staff minibus service, encouragement for car sharing and provision for cycling. Provided these measures were implemented, it is considered that the disadvantages of the site location in transport terms would be offset to some extent.

Landscape impact

Due to its scale and character, the proposed development would inevitably have an impact on the rural character of the surrounding area, giving the immediate locality a more built up appearance. However, the proposal would not have the effect of extending development into open countryside, but would instead consolidate the existing sporadic development in the vicinity. The site has the benefit of some existing screening provided by established hedgerows and trees, which would be supplemented by additional landscaping. The design of the proposed building would also help to mitigate its visual impact, with its linked block form, broken roofline and changes in external materials, helping to reduce its apparent scale. The reduction in size of the nursing from 62 to 40 bedrooms also helps to limit its visual impact. Given these factors, and bearing in mind the valid outline permission for a 40 bedroom motel, it is considered that it would be difficult to substantiate the refusal of the application on landscape impact grounds.

Adjacent uses

Concerns have been raised locally about the potential for conflicts to arise in the future between the proposed nursing home and the adjacent public house and working farm. In this respect it should be noted that the revised building design features no bedroom windows facing towards the public house, with service accommodation and communal areas concentrated at the southern end of the building. Noise would also be attenuated to some extent by additional planting and screening proposed. The reduction in the overall scale of the proposal, has also allowed the building to be positioned much further away from the adjacent farm. Given that the nature of the nursing care proposed, and the closely regulated patient environment that would result, it is suggested that the development would be less susceptible to potential neighbour conflicts than a residential scheme or residential care home.

Other matters

In the light of the concerns raised by the Highway Authority, additional information has been sought from the applicant about achievable visibility splays. The results of on-going discussions on this matter will be reported verbally.

In response to concerns raised locally about drainage problems in the area, a number of measures are proposed. Rainwater from roofs would be collected and stored for re-use in a grey water system for flushing of toilets and laundry, etc. Foul water would be directed to a private treatment plant which would discharge to a reed bed and pond within the site. Porosity tests are being carried out to demonstrate the viability of proposed soakaways.

Conclusion

It is considered that the planning considerations relating to the proposal are balanced. The proposal would, on one hand, result in a relatively substantial development in a rural location, where planning policy generally seeks to limit new development. On the other hand, the site does have the benefit of permission for a commercial development of a similar scale, albeit with a different character of use. The revised proposals do seek to overcome concerns raised previously by reducing the scale of the nursing home, and by addressing concerns about relationships with adjoining uses and local drainage problems. The proposal would also provide additional nursing care beds to meet increasing demand and would provide new employment opportunities. In conclusion, it is considered that the balance of arguments is in favour of the proposal.

8. RECOMMENDATION

Subject to outstanding matters to access and drainage being resolved satisfactorily, it is recommended that planning permission be granted subject to conditions.