

Ref: DB/pdas/21048

PLANNING, DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

For the:

**ERECTION OF A SINGLE-STOREY DAY ROOM AND FIRST-FLOOR EXTENSION
WITH ASSOCIATED LANDSCAPING AND UNDERCROFT PARKING**

at:

HILLIER ALSMHOUSE, FARNHAM ROAD, GUILDFORD, SURREY GU2 7LT



CONTENTS

1. Introduction
2. Site
3. Relevant Planning History
4. Relevant Planning Policies
5. Design Considerations
6. Access Considerations
7. Other Planning Considerations
8. Planning Conditions & Obligations / CIL Charging Schedule
9. Conclusion

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.01 Hillier Almshouse is a registered charity (no.201218), providing accommodation for women over a certain age set up originally with the charitable objective of providing “Almshouses for poor women who are not less than 45 years of age and are members of the Church of England or of some congregation of protestant dissenters or Methodists, preference to be given to applicants who have been domestic servants and have become incapacitated for work”. The Charity originally having been set up in Curtain Road, London but moved to Guildford in 1878 on land provided by the Earl of Onslow. The original buildings were demolished and the present accommodation constructed in the early 1970's. The existing buildings have remained largely unaltered since construction.
- 1.02 This planning application is for a proposal to take down the existing single-storey covered link between the present east and west wings and to construct an infill linking building to provide four residential accommodation units at first floor level; a rebuilt link corridor at ground floor and a covered car parking area. The opportunity will also be taken to construct an orangery style glazed day room to increase the amenity space for residents.
- 1.03 The Charity relies on income from its residents and the more residential units that can be provided on the site, the more effective the Charity can be in providing support for its residents and the more homes that can be provided to help address the local need.
- 1.04 This statement has been prepared to support the above planning application and should be read in conjunction with the following drawings and other reports:
- a. Architectural documents by Nye Saunders Architects
 - 21048-E001 Existing Location and Block Plans
 - 21048-E002 Proposed Location and Block Plans
 - 21048-E100 Existing Ground Floor Plan
 - 21048-E101 Existing First Floor Plan
 - 21048-E102 Existing Roof Plan
 - 21048-E110 Existing Elevations – front and rear
 - 21048-E111 Existing Elevations – East Wing
 - 21048-E112 Existing Elevations – West Wing
 - 21048-P100 Proposed Site Plan
 - 21048-P101 Proposed Ground Floor Plan
 - 21048-P102 Proposed First Floor Plan
 - 21048-P103 Proposed Roof Plan
 - 21048-P110 Proposed Elevations – front and rear
 - 21048-P111 Proposed Elevations – East Wing
 - 21048-P112 Proposed Elevations – West Wing
 - b. Arboriculturist documents by Keen Consultants Ltd.
 - 1498-KC-XX-YTREE Tree Survey and Impact Assessment
 - c. Ecological survey by JWK Wildlife Surveys
 - 23/07 Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment

2. SITE

Surrounding Context

- 2.01 The townscape character type is 'Victorian / Edwardian Suburbs' (Farnham Road: 6A). The Council defines this area as follows:

Farnham Road is situated to the west of Guildford's historic core, across the railway line. It is centred around Farnham Road Hospital with Guildford Park to the north and the historic Mount to the south. Farnham Road falls within the rural character area B1: Hog's Back Chalk Ridge.

- 2.02 It is further described as having 'predominantly late Victorian small scale residential development'; 'regular grid of straight roads lined by two storey terraces and semi-detached dwellings'; and consisting of 'brick and occasional stone or flint sometimes combined in decorative patterns, with slate or clay tile roofs'. Whilst the surrounding area follows this characterisation (especially the northern approach from Bray Road), the application site has largely lost the Victorian / Edwardian character, save for a small summerhouse and bus stop fronting Farnham Road which includes salvaged and re-used elements of the original almshouse.
- 2.03 Whilst the application site falls within the rural character area B1 (i.e., Hog's Back Chalk Ridge), given its urban setting it does not benefit from the key characteristics which define this land designation (e.g., large fields of arable and pasture, sparse settlement patterns, peaceful rural landscapes etc.). However, the site is sloping which does form part of the area character.

Application Site

- 2.04 The site occupies a relatively prominent position in the town, albeit that the buildings other than the end gable of each wing are well set back from the Farnham Road. The large, protected beech tree is a strong feature and the summerhouse is a reminder of the attractive buildings that used to occupy the site. On the rear elevation to Bray Road is an underwhelming approach to the almshouse complex with the brick rear wall of the link corridor facing the entrance and partial views of the east and west wings where the current accommodation is housed.
- 2.05 The existing 1970's built accommodation broadly follows the pattern of development of the original 1879 almshouse with a U-shaped arrangement open to the south, stepping down to the town and around in effect a courtyard garden, now dominated by the protected beech tree. Each flat benefits from views out onto garden space.
- 2.06 It is not known as to why the accommodation wings were not originally designed to be more interconnected and constructed with the accommodation now proposed. Currently there is a simple flat roofed corridor linking each side of the site with glazing onto the courtyard with a solid brick back wall masking out views through from the north side main vehicular approach.
- 2.07 The present buildings are typical of their time being constructed of masonry walling predominantly brick faced at ground floor and with concrete tile hanging at first floor all with shallow pitched concrete tiled roofs. Link corridor, boiler room and other ancillary spaces having flat roofs. The courtyard and gardens to the west and east boundaries are attractive amenity spaces, the north side tarmacked approach being less attractive and purely functional.

- 2.08 Some remains of the previous almshouse are retained and were re-used in the small summerhouse built close to the Farnham Road boundary and the bus stop on the Farnham Road. These structures demonstrate the attractiveness of the original almshouses designed by the eminent arts and crafts architects Ernest George and Harold Peto. There are no proposed changes to these structures.
- 2.09 Limited, informal car parking is available on site for both resident and visitor use. Most residents, however, are not car owners because of the proximity of the town's amenities and the site's excellent public transport links.

3. RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

- 3.01 The Council's planning history for the site is:
- **GUI/10915/160/71** Erection of summer house and bus shelter
 - **GUI/10224C/710/69C** Erection of 36 old peoples flatlets, a wardens flat and ancillary accommodation (revised details)
 - **GUI/10224B/710/69B** Erection of 36 old peoples flatlets, a wardens flat and ancillary accommodation
 - **GUI/10224/710/69** Demolition of existing almshouses and erection of a part single, part two storey development comprising 36 old peoples flats, a wardens flat and ancillary accommodation
- 3.02 There is also a Tree Preservation Order (TPO) on the site for the large beech tree in the middle of the courtyard (ref: P1/201/45) and TPOs on the east boundary with the Farnham Road Hospital (ref: P1/201/374).

4. RELEVANT PLANNING POLICIES

National

- 4.01 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), published in July 2021, supersedes the March 2012 version and the more recent July 2018 revision and February 2019 update which introduced a fundamental change to national planning policy.
- 4.02 The NPPF seeks to provide a proactive national policy framework that is not simply about scrutiny but operates to encourage sustainable growth. At the heart of the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development (paragraph 11).
- 4.03 Paragraph 60 of the NPPF states: "To support the Government's objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes, it is important that a sufficient amount and variety of land can come forward where it is needed".
- 4.04 Of relevance to this application is paragraph 69 of the NPPF which encourages the promotion of small and medium sized sites – "giving great weight to the benefits of using suitable sites within existing settlements for homes".
- 4.05 With regard to design, the NPPF maintains the previous national policy emphasis on achieving high quality design particularly in relation to the residential environment.

4.06 In March 2012, the Government introduced the final version of its National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) that supports the NPPF and provides further guidance on the Government's approach to delivering sustainable development in the UK. It has subsequently been revised in 2018, 2019, 2021 and most recently in September 2023. Of relevance to this application is the section on 'Housing for older and disabled people', as the charity accepts female residents from the age of sixty years of age.

Local

4.07 The current development plan comprises the following relevant documents:

- Local Plan: Strategy and Sites 2015-2034 (adopted April 2019)
- Local Plan: Development Management Policies (adopted March 2023)
- South East Plan (abolished February 2013, except NRM6)

4.08 The policies of particular relevance to this application are set out below:

Policy	Title
LP: S&S2019	
D2	Climate change, sustainable design, construction and energy
S2	Planning for the borough – our spatial development strategy
ID4	Green and Blue infrastructure
P5	Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area
LP: DMP2023	
D15	Climate Change Adaptation
ID10	Parking Standards for New Development
SEP: 2013	
NRM6	Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area

Supplementary Planning Documents

4.09 In addition to the Local Plan, the Council has published a number of Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs), the following of which are of relevance to this application:

- Climate Change, Sustainable Design, Construction and Energy (SPD 2020)
- Parking Standards for New Development (SPD 2023)
- Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (SPD 2017)

4.10 The compliance of the application proposal with the development plans and National Policy is explored further below.

5. DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

Context

- 5.01 The application site is situated in Guildford, on the northern side of Farnham Road (A31) – the main approach into Guildford town centre from the west. The site neighbours Farnham Road Hospital to the east and is opposite Guildford County School to the south. Residential properties sit to the west (contemporary flats) and north (Victorian / Edwardian residential street), where the main vehicular access to the site is located.
- 5.02 The southern boundary aligning Farnham Road (A31) consists of a low brick wall with a tall, well-maintained hedge above and along its entire length. Two pedestrian access points (brick piers with wrought iron gates) and a Victorian bus stop are the only elements which interrupt this boundary. The site is therefore well screened from the main road, especially from a pedestrian scale.
- 5.03 The main building of the neighbouring Farnham Road Hospital is Listed, as is a separate building to the northeast of the almshouse site. There are also Locally Listed buildings on the hospital site. The setting of none of these would be affected by the proposed almshouse development, as it is sheltered from view by the existing east wing of the almshouse.

Amount

- 5.04 The proposed scheme comprises four new self-contained flats. The extension is proposed at first-floor to retain some on-site parking which would otherwise be lost. A further single-storey extension is proposed to provide additional communal space for the residents.

Layout

- 5.05 The accommodation has been designed in compliance with the 'Technical Housing Standards - Nationally Described Space Standard'. Each new flat is a minimum of 37sq.m with shower room, with one new flat benefitting from a bathroom which measures over the 39sq.m requirement for floor area.
- 5.06 The flats have been configured so that windows facing out from habitable rooms do not look directly onto the private amenity of neighbouring properties to the north; views to the north are directed down Bray Road. The one first-floor flat that faces south enjoys views onto the central courtyard which is shared communal space.

Scale

- 5.07 The proposed link has been designed to be at a size and scale comparable to the existing buildings. The intention is that these additions will provide an attractive elevation to both the Farnham Road and to the main vehicular approach from Bray Road. It is therefore considered a positive addition to the scale, character & visual amenity of the existing site and to the neighbourhood.

Landscaping

- 5.08 The existing soft landscaping will remain unchanged outside of the main works area (i.e., east of the east wing, west of the west wing and generally the southern part of the site). The hardstanding to the north of the property (currently used as informal parking) will remain as hardstanding, albeit locally disturbed by the new structure above at first-floor and thus may require resurfacing.

5.09 The landscaping within the courtyard will generally be retained with an extension of the patio area to the north of the courtyard where the proposed day room will be located. The areas of existing soft landscaping (e.g., lawn, flowerbeds etc.) contains elements which are typical to a private domestic garden and will remain unchanged.

Appearance

5.10 The extension is to be constructed with structural piers at ground floor level to support the new first floor accommodation over which will enable car parking spaces to be retained at ground level. External walling is to be faced with a mixed palette of brick, render and some timber cladding to provide a contemporary feel to the accommodation and to present an attractive elevation to the main vehicular approach from Bray Road.

Amenity

5.11 The existing amenity will remain unchanged for the residents. Whilst the footprint of the Day Room will subtract from the total amount of external amenity space, it is an internal communal space open to the residents with plenty of external doors and windows bringing the outside in.

Use

5.12 The existing planning category use of the site is C3 (Dwellinghouse), which will remain unchanged.



Proposed North Elevation

6. ACCESS CONSIDERATIONS

Generally

- 6.01 Vehicular access is gained to the site from Bray Road to the north. Pedestrian access is possible from the same entrance, and two gates to the south from Farnham Road (A31). A public footpath wraps around the western and north-western boundaries, connecting Farnham Road to Bray Road allowing good local connectivity.

Public Transport

- 6.02 A bus stop sits immediately outside the application site to the south (Stop ID: surampaw), offering the 18, 46 and 65 bus services eastwards into Guildford and Mewsey. A west-bound bus stop is situated on the opposite side of Farnham Road (A31) with bus routes 8, 18, 46 and 65 to Farnham, Alton and Onslow Village.
- 6.03 The main Guildford train station is less than half a mile away, taking roughly a 10minute walk. This sits on the main line between Portsmouth Harbour and London Waterloo, but also has routes to Reading all of which have myriad opportunities for onward travel. The proximity of the site to public transport services makes it a highly sustainable location.
- 6.04 Guildford Town Centre is approximately half a mile to the east, meaning residents have less than a fifteen-minute walk before they can access local amenities.

Proposals – pedestrian access

- 6.05 The approach route to the main entrance (i.e., north of east wing) will remain unchanged. It is proposed that the existing stepped threshold leading to the ancillary northern entrance of the west wing will be amended to create a level threshold, enabling improved access to the west wing from the north. This opens opportunities to utilise the plant room for a bin store, improving the external appearance by hiding away unsightly bin caddies.
- 6.06 A flush threshold will be provided to each new individual flat, but they can only be accessed via an existing staircase and therefore step-free access from the outside is not possible. A passenger lift has been considered as part of the design stage process, but unfortunately the high initial outlay and ongoing maintenance costs mean such a facility is not sustainable for this charity.

Proposals – vehicular access

- 6.07 To improve vehicular access onto the site, it is proposed to widen the existing access from Bray Road. Bray Road is effectively a dead-end with the application site at the end; the end of the road (i.e., immediately outside of the application site) is the full width of the road as vehicles are prohibited from parking here through double-yellow lines, providing a turning space. Widening the access capitalises on this space and is achieved simply by removing a brick pier and picket fence to enable vehicles more space to manoeuvre in to and out of the site.
- 6.08 The application site is a non-strategic site so the car and cycle parking standards should be considered against Appendix A of the parking supplementary planning document. Given the suburban location, and the fact that residents must be over sixty years of age to reside at the property, the maximum vehicle parking spaces provided should be '1 car space per 1 or 2 bed self-contained unit OR 0.5 per communal unit OR individual assessment' (i.e., category: Elderly (sheltered)). As the

existing parking arrangements do not meet the current parking standards, we believe the application should be considered on an individual assessment.

- 6.09 The existing parking arrangement on site is a 'free-for-all' for residents, staff and visitors with no allocated or unallocated parking spaces. Therefore, the exact number of parking spaces is unknown, but generally one could organise approximately eight vehicles on site without compromising access (e.g., whilst there is physically more space available, any more vehicles on site would block pedestrian entrances or result in tandem parking, restricting vehicle movement). Furthermore, the residents are all over the age of sixty and, given the proximity to Guildford town centre and public transport, reliance on private vehicles is low.
- 6.10 The proposed development formalises seven unallocated car parking spaces, five of which would be sheltered beneath the first-floor extension in the undercroft. Furthermore, the proposed first-floor extension has a cantilever, meaning some of the structure at ground floor is set back. This enables more space at ground level for manoeuvring vehicles, at additional cost to the applicant (i.e., compared to conventional structures). The structure supporting the first-floor extension above undeniably affects the space at ground floor, but this space would be needed for manoeuvring vehicles rather than be available for additional parking spaces anyway and therefore it is felt that the number of existing parking spaces is not greatly affected by the proposals.
- 6.11 Moreover, the bin store arrangement has been regularised, releasing outside space for formal parking spaces and vehicle movements instead.
- 6.12 In terms of providing bicycle storage, again the site location and age of residents should be considered. However, given there is opportunity to introduce secure bicycle storage, three bicycle stands have been added in the undercroft to satisfy Policy ID10 and to give flexibility to residents, visitors and staff alike.

7. OTHER PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

Principle of Development

- 7.01 The application site is located within the defined urban boundary of Guildford and within an established residential area, but outside of the Guildford Town Centre. It is not washed over by the Metropolitan Green Belt.
- 7.02 Guildford Borough Council's Policy S2 states "development will be directed to the most sustainable locations, making the best use of previously developed land. It goes on to say that Guildford town centre is the most preferred location for new development. Given the application site is located just outside of Guildford town centre, we consider this to satisfy the Council's requirements under Policy S2. Therefore, the principle of development in general terms is acceptable on the application site subject to addressing all other relevant and material planning considerations.

Housing for older and disabled people

- 7.03 The National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) states that "the need to provide housing for older people is critical... offering older people a better choice of accommodation to suit their changing needs can help them live independently for

longer, feel more connected to their communities and help reduce costs to the social care and health systems'. This modest contribution of four new units on a sustainable site is in line with the Government's ambitions for increasing the amount of housing for older people in an ageing population.

Ecology

- 7.04 A preliminary bat roost assessment has been carried out by JWK Wildlife Surveys and a copy of the report is submitted with this application. The report concludes that the proposed development is not within 10m of any identified potential roosting features on the existing structure and therefore recommends that no further survey work is required.
- 7.05 The nature of the proposed development (i.e., predominantly over existing hardstanding) and application site (i.e., urban area with no nearby watercourses) mean it is difficult to enhance the biodiversity of the site. The applicant is happy to follow the recommendations and enhancements suggested in the above ecological report, which we trust is sufficient to satisfy Policy ID4.
- 7.06 Given the modest scale of the proposed development and its location within an established urban area, it is considered that the proposals will have no direct impact on the ecological integrity of the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (SPA). It is therefore considered that the proposal satisfies the Council's Policy P5 and the retained Policy NRM6 of the South East Plan.

Trees

- 7.07 A tree constraints plan has been prepared by Keen Consultants, a copy of which is submitted with this application. The proposed development is sufficiently far away from the group of trees with a TPO on the eastern boundary with Farnham Road Hospital and outside their sphere of influence.
- 7.08 The large beech tree in the centre of the courtyard also has a TPO. The root protection area (RPA) of this tree occupies most of the courtyard and the proposed Day Room will encroach on the RPA. However, the design has been carefully considered to ensure that the total area of hardstanding does not cover more than 20% of the currently unsurfaced root protection area. Furthermore, it is proposed that the foundations of the Day Room are constructed using specialist tree friendly techniques (e.g., Treesafe system by Abbey Pynford) to prevent damage to the tree roots.

Drainage and Utilities

- 7.09 The foul waste produced from the new first-floor flats will connect into the existing foul waste system on site. Likewise, the surface water from the proposed development will connect into the existing surface water system on site.

Sustainable Design and Construction

- 7.10 In accordance with the Climate Change, Sustainable Design, Construction and Energy (SPD 2020), a Climate Change, Energy and Sustainable Development Questionnaire has been completed for this development and is attached to this application. The questionnaire includes responses in relation to Policy D15, and below additional information (question 6).
- 7.11 The proposed development is for extensions to an existing building, therefore opportunities to respond to environmental factors are restricted. That said, the

existing building is a U-shape facing predominantly south-south-east, and the proposed development occupies the northern link so benefits from the optimum north-south orientation for solar gains. This should reduce the need for mechanical heating for the day room and the two south-facing flats.

- 7.12 Furthermore, the large beech tree in the centre of the courtyard has a Tree Preservation Order, meaning it cannot be readily altered or removed (i.e., without approval by the LPA). Given its level of protection, it has been relied upon to provide natural screening from solar gains to south facing windows.
- 7.13 Artificial lighting is unfortunately inevitable for the north-facing undercroft parking being created, but low-energy lighting will be specified and the number of lights carefully considered (i.e., as few as possible) to minimise the impact.
- 7.14 Lastly, solar photovoltaic panels are proposed on the eastern roof slope of the existing east wing and western roof slope of the existing west wing. The positioning has been considered to avoid neighbouring obstacles (e.g., trees or buildings) from casting shadows on the arrays and reducing their efficiency. It was originally considered to include an array on the southern roof slope of the new extension (i.e., the most efficient orientation for solar PV), but the large TPO tree in the centre of the courtyard would cast shadow and reduce efficiency.

8. PLANNING CONDITIONS AND PLANNING OBLIGATIONS / COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY (CIL) CHARGING SCHEDULE

General

- 8.01 Guildford Borough Council (GBC) do not currently offer a pre-application service, which is unfortunate as we would typically engage in this process to help inform the information submitted as part of the formal planning application. Indeed, a pre-application was submitted and lodged with the Council but had to be withdrawn when the Council closed their pre-application advice service. Nevertheless, every effort has been made to follow the Council's validation requirements and utilise the available information online to help inform the application.

Planning Conditions

- 8.02 The Applicant is content to accept any reasonably worded conditions that the Council considers may be necessary to attach to any grant of planning permission.
- 8.03 We welcome a collaborative approach, so in this regard Nye Saunders will liaise with the Planning Officers during the application period to agree the scope of planning conditions to be imposed. Please do not hesitate to contact us during the planning process to discuss any queries or additional information requests that you may have.

Planning Obligations / CIL Charging Schedule

- 8.04 The Council has not yet adopted a CIL Charging Schedule but advises that contributions are usually made in the form of section 106 agreements. Given the applicant is a charity, we understand that no contributions through a section 106 agreement will be sought for the proposed development.

9. CONCLUSION

- 9.01 The application proposal comprises a high-quality, contemporary design solution for a site situated in a highly sustainable location, and in compliance with national and local planning policies.
- 9.02 Consequently, the application proposal is considered to comprise the type and form of sustainable development that the Government is seeking to promote as part of its strong national planning objective to significantly boost the supply of new housing across the country.
- 9.03 For the reasons and justifications set out above, the application should be considered acceptable and we commend this application for approval.