

Appendix H to the Design and Access Statement

Planning Statement

In support of an application for

Outline Planning Permission with One Matter Reserved

At

The Church Road, Clacton Campus

of the

Colchester Institute Corporation

On Behalf of

Stone Crest Homes Limited

January 2024.

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1.0 Project Summary

- 1.1 This Planning Statement has been prepared to support an outline planning application for the redevelopment of the former Clacton Campus of the Colchester Institute Corporation also known as Clacton College.
- 1.2 Clacton College closed in March 2020 and since then the building has remained vacant.
- 1.3 The proposals include the demolition of the auditorium building, the conversion and extension of the existing classroom block and the erection of a new apartment block on the former auditorium site.
- 1.4 The applicant site is a brownfield site which is supported by the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF – see Planning Policy Framework Section 5.0 below).
- 1.5 The site is in a sustainable location within easy walking distance of the shops and other amenities in Clacton town centre.
- 1.6 The design of the scheme revisits 'seaside architecture' as a building type and refers to the essential elements of this building type avoiding 'pastiche' and instead implementing balconies, planted terraces, large windows and a variety of materials. These create a modern building giving a contemporary interpretation to seaside development.
- 1.7 The scheme will transform a negative site into a high-quality modern building which will complement the neighbouring Clacton Seafront Conservation Area (CSCA).
- 1.8 The scheme will not only make efficient use of a brownfield site but will also 'upcycle' an existing building in accordance with the principles of sustainability.
- 1.9 The scheme accords with the principles of the development plan for the area as a whole.

2.0 Introduction

- 2.1 The scheme comprises the demolition of the auditorium building, conversion of the existing classroom building to form 35No 1-bedroom and 2-bedroom flats and the erection of a new building to form 41No 1-bedroom and 2-bedroom flats.
- 2.2 The development site is 0.25 hectares and in addition to the converted classroom building and the new-build accommodation will provide 42No car spaces including a car club space, set down spaces for delivery vehicles and high-quality landscaping.
- 2.3 This Planning Statement is Appendix G to the Design and Access Statement and is part of a suite of documents which accompany this application as follows:

Design and Access Statement prepared by Barefoot & Gilles

Ecology Report prepared by Practical Ecology

Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment prepared by Cottee Transport

Historic Desk-based Assessment by ECUS

Environment Agency Flood Map for Planning

2.4 This application includes the following drawings:

2248-DE-10-01-D	Site Plan as Proposed
2248-DE-10-02-A	Site Plan as Existing
2248-DE-20-01-A	Proposed Ground Floor Plan
2248-DE-20-02-A	Proposed First Floor Plan
2248-DE-20-03-A	Proposed Second Floor Plan
2248-DE-20-04-A	Proposed Third Floor Plan
2248-DE-20-05-A	Proposed Fourth Floor Plan
2248-DE-20-06-A	Proposed Fifth Floor Plan
2248-DE-20-07-A	Proposed Roof Plan
2248-DE-30-01-A	Proposed Elevations
2248-DE-30-02-A	3D Visualisations
2248-DE-30-03-A	Proposed Street Scene

3.0 Development and Planning History

- 3.1 There are two minor applications on record which refer to the operation of the building as an educational institution, a single storey extension associated with external landscape works (Ref. No. 15/01040/FUL dated September 2015) and an application for an additional storage area approved in 2013.
- 3.2 By far the more significant application, however, was submitted in November 2021 by Churchill Retirement Living Limited (CRL) for 61 retirement living apartments in a four-storey building of traditional design intended to complement the neighbouring Conservation Area (Ref. No. 21/02027/FUL dated 25.12.21).
- 3.3 The applicants chose to appeal the application when Tendring DC failed to determine the application within the stipulated period. An appeal was lodged and an inquiry held in September 2022 followed by the publication of a decision on 6th December 2022 where the appeal was dismissed (Ref. No. APP/P1560/W/22/3295313 – See Appendix A).
- 3.4 The appeal decision is significant as it sets out a series of putative reasons for Tendring DC to refuse permission but records that Tendring DC as the Local Planning Authority (LPA) chose not to defend all but one of these putative reasons. This establishes that the reason for refusal that the LPA chose to uphold is the effect that the development would have on the CSCA stating that the consideration should be:

'Whether the proposal would preserve or enhance the character of the Clacton Seafront Conservation Area'.

The implication of this statement is that a four-storey building could be acceptable, stating in Paragraph 15 that:

'a well-designed building of the scale proposed could be acceptable in principle'.

The appeal decision then goes on to state that the scheme proposed by Churchill Retirement Living fell short of satisfying the required standard of design needed to complement the CSCA.

- 3.5 In choosing not to defend a number of putative reasons for refusal the LPA effectively establishes a series of considerations relevant to the current application. These are discussed in Section 4.0 'Planning Considerations' below.

4.0 Planning Considerations

- 4.1 The LPA chose not to defend the use of the site for educational purposes. The reason that Clacton College closed in March 2021 was falling student numbers and the fact that the other facilities operated by the Colchester Institute could cater adequately for the student population. The buildings in Church Road can therefore be considered redundant.
- 4.2 The CRL scheme does not provide sufficient car parking to service the flats on the basis of one space per flat. The implication, therefore, is that a certain level of on street car parking is acceptable for the development of the site. The CRL application was supported by a Transport Statement to support the level of car parking proposed. Similarly, this application is supported by a Traffic Impact Assessment (Appendix D to the Design and Access Statement).
- 4.3 The CRL scheme is liable for a contribution under the East Coast RAMS scheme, similarly the current scheme will be liable for a contribution. This is acknowledged by the applicant and is not contested.
- 4.4 The CRL scheme does not provide affordable housing and the LPA recognises that the development of this site would not be economically viable if affordable housing were to be a condition for planning permission. The current scheme proposes the refurbishment and conversion of a large existing building which require considerable expenditure rendering the provision of affordable housing economically unviable.
- 4.5 The appeal document does not consider the requirement for contributions to public amenity as grounds for refusal as there was no indication that CRL intended to contest this requirement. Similarly, the current application, if permission is granted, will be subject to a requirement for a contribution to public amenity and this is acknowledged by the applicant.
- 4.6 Items 4.1 – 4.5 above establish a series of principles which, by implication, have been accepted by the LPA and which will apply to the current application. These are acknowledged by the applicant and have been material considerations in the design of the proposed scheme.

5.0 Planning Policy Framework

- 5.1 If the appeal decision set out a series of principles for the redevelopment of the former Clacton College site redevelopment of the site is supported by a number of specific policies within the Tendring District Local Plan 2013 – 2033 Sections 1 and 2 adopted 25th January 2022.
- 5.2 Tendring District Local Plan 2013 - 2033 and Beyond – Section 1 which is the North Essex Authorities' Shared Strategic Section 1 Plan Adopted January 2021. Specific policies which relate directly to the applicant site are as follows:

SP1 - This states a presumption in favour of development where the site is in a sustainable location.

SP 2 - East Coast Recreational disturbance and Avoidance Mitigation Strategy (RAMS). A contribution will be required and this is acknowledged by the applicant.

SP3 - States that development should be accommodated within existing settlements. The applicant site is located in an established residential area.

SP4 – The Tendring District will need to provide 11,000 homes within the period of the Local Plan and is currently reporting a shortfall. This development will make a significant contribution to housing supply.

SP6 – Development should only take place where there is sufficient infrastructure and connectivity to service it. The applicant site is well served by the existing infrastructure and is within walking distance of the town centre and railway station.

SP7 – New development should be to a high standard. The agent for the current scheme is an award-winning practice with extensive experience in residential design.

5.3 Tendring District Council Local Plan 2013 – 2033 and Beyond Section 2, adopted 25th January 2022 contains a number of policies which relate to the site as follows:

SPL 1 – Clacton on Sea is identified as a strategic area for growth under this Policy and therefore supports development of the applicant site.

SPL 2 – States that development should be concentrated within existing settlement boundaries. The applicant site is located in an established residential district See also Section 1 Item 5.2 above.

SSPL 3 – Sustainable Development - States that development should be sustainable in terms of design, practicality, compatibility with the surrounding area and energy consumption. The Design and Access Statement (DAS) which accompanies this document sets out the design principles of the applicant scheme. The DAS demonstrates how the design will make a positive contribution to the Clacton on Sea Conservation Area (CSCA) and the features which have been incorporated to reduce carbon emissions.

HP 3 – Green Infrastructure - currently the applicant site makes very little contribution to natural habitat and biodiversity. In accordance with this Policy the proposals include well-designed landscaping, planted terraces and green roofs all of which will constitute biodiversity net gain.

LP1 – Housing supply, Tendring DC is committed to providing 11,000 homes within the Local Plan period in accordance with this Policy and SP4 of Section 1 of the Local Plan. This development will make a significant contribution to the housing supply.

LP2 – Housing choice – the scheme will provide a range of flats sizes in accordance with this Policy.

LP3 - Housing Layout – The Design and Access Statement describes how the current proposals will optimize the use of the site and create a development which is compatible with its surroundings and provides a pleasant and secure environment for its residents.

PP14 – Priority Areas for Regeneration – Clacton town centre and seafront area are identified as a priority area for regeneration under this Policy and is therefore supportive of the redevelopment of the former Clacton College site.

PPL1 – Development and Flood Risk – The applicant site is identified as Flood Risk Zone 1 and is therefore of low risk of flooding.

PPL4 – Biodiversity and Geodiversity – The DAS describes measures that will be taken to increase biodiversity on the site in accordance with this Policy.

PPL5 – Water Conservation Drainage and Sewerage – states that schemes should implement Sustainable Urban Drainage measures, the current scheme incorporates on site surface water attenuation measures discharging into the combined sewer in Church Road in accordance with this Policy.

PPL8 – Conservation Areas – The applicant site is in the Clacton Seafront Conservation Area (CSCA) and therefore heritage conservation is a major factor in the consideration of the current application. The design of current scheme recognizes the significance of the location and the DAS describes how the ‘seaside architecture’ of the area can be adapted to reflect modern design standards and avoid the criticism of ‘pastiche’. In addition, a Historic Environment Desk-Based assessment has been commissioned (Appendix E of the Design and Access Statement) which describes the compatibility of the scheme with the surrounding heritage asset.

PPL 10 – Renewable Energy Generation and Energy Efficient Measures – The scheme complies with this policy as it incorporates several energy efficient measures including a ‘fabric first’ approach to design whereby air admittance control and insulation optimize the thermal efficiency of the building envelope. In addition, extensive PV arrays on the roofs and terraces will generate sufficient energy to contribute to the common parts.

CP1 – Sustainable Transport and Accessibility – The development site is in a highly sustainable location, within walking distance of the railway station and local bus routes. The railway station provides links to London and employment centres throughout the region. In addition, the shopping and other amenities in the town centre are within easy walking distance. The seafront is a few minutes’ walk from the site with the beach and other promenade providing additional amenities.

- 5.4 The National Planning Policy Framework precedes the Tendring DC Local Plan and has informed many of the policies in both Sections of this document. Paragraphs which support particularly relate to the current application are as follows:

Paragraph 8 – Relates to the planning system generally and the means by which it can achieve sustainable development. The Paragraph states that there are three overarching objectives economic, social and environmental. The development of the applicant site will address positively each of these objectives.

Paragraph 60 – Refers to the government’s objective of ‘significantly boosting the supply of homes’ and states that it is important that a sufficient amount and variety of land can come forward where it is needed. Development of the applicant site will significantly contribute to the delivery of homes in accordance with Local Plan Policy LP1 (see above).

Paragraph 69 – This Paragraph recognizes that small and medium sized sites can ‘make an important contribution to meeting the housing requirement of an area, and are often built out quickly’. The current scheme includes the refurbishment of an existing building which can be refurbished and converted relatively quickly.

Paragraph 120 – Sub section C of this Paragraph states that LPAs should ‘give substantial weight to the value of using suitable brownfield land within settlements for homes and other identified needs’, the applicant site is essentially a vacant brownfield site within an established residential area.

Paragraph 124 – States that ‘planning policies and decisions should support development that makes efficient use of land’ taking into account identified need, local market conditions, the availability of infrastructure, the desirability of maintaining an area’s character and setting and the importance of securing well-designed attractive and healthy places. It can be seen that a density of 130 units per acre (321 per hectare) is an efficient use of land which maintains the character of the area (See Appendix E to the Design and Access Statement – Historic Environment Desk Based Assessment by ECUS).

Paragraph 126 – States that ‘The creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities.’ The agent for this application is an award-winning practice with extensive experience in residential design. The intention is to revisit the design of ‘seaside architecture’ to produce a scheme which complements the neighbouring CSCA. (See the Design and Access Statement Section 9.0 ‘Appearance’).

Paragraph 189 – States in reference to sites of historic local value and those of the highest significance ‘These assets are an irreplaceable resource and should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance’. Currently the Clacton College site exerts an entirely negative influence on the surrounding area to the detriment of the Clacton Seafront Conservation Area. Appropriate redevelopment of the site will obviate this effect and the scheme described by the Design and Access Statement and Drawings which accompany this application are considered by consultants appointed to advise on heritage matters to constitute less than serious harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset (See Appendix E to the Design and Access Statement).

Paragraph 202 – States that ‘Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.’ The report in Appendix E to the Design and Access Statement considers that the proposals will lead to less than substantial harm to the adjacent designated heritage asset and the benefits of the redevelopment of the site are set out in Section 6.0 below.

6.0 Benefits and Planning Balance

- 6.1 Section 5.0 above of this document demonstrates that the current proposals are supported by all of the relevant Tendring DC Local Plan Policies provided that the scheme does not constitute significant harm to the adjacent heritage assets.
- 6.2 The proposals re-purpose an existing building which currently makes a negative contribution both in terms of architecture and social impact. The original use of the building is no longer viable and the fabric has fallen into disrepair, a situation which is exacerbated by vandalism which, in addition to physical damage, is exerting a disruptive and socially disturbing impact on the neighbourhood.
- 6.3 The proposals to ‘upcycle’ the majority of the existing fabric will reduce the carbon footprint of construction which would otherwise take place were the site to be completely redeveloped with new building.
- 6.4 Redevelopment of the site is in accordance with the Local Plan Policy which identifies the location of the applicant site as a priority area for regeneration (Policy PP 14)
- 6.5 The scheme will provide a range of accommodation some of which is of a scale to appeal to the first-time buyers’ market (compact 1-Bed 2-Person Flats) and some which will appeal to people downsizing and looking for generous accommodation with sea views.
- 6.6 The appearance of the development is intended to be compatible with ‘seaside architecture’ of the region whilst avoiding the criticism of ‘pastiche’. This allows for a building of sufficient scale to be viable economically.
- 6.7 Heritage consultants appointed to consider the effect of the development as proposed have reported that it should lead to less than serious harm to the CSCA.

7.0 Conclusion

- 7.1 The intention is to produce a high-quality residential scheme which reflects seaside architecture without compromising contemporary design or the requirements of energy-conscious development. The proposed development is of a sufficient scale to be viable in a highly volatile economic environment.

Redevelopment will ensure the removal of a site which currently has a deleterious effect on its surroundings, replacing it with a building of striking design which will enhance the Conservation Area and make a positive contribution both economically and socially to an area identified as a priority for regeneration.

The site itself has no intrinsic heritage value and no significant harm has been identified to the Clacton Seafront Conservation Area. The regeneration of the site can be seen to be supported by all relevant Policies in both the Local Plan and the NPPF and therefore the benefits of the current proposals can be seen to outweigh any possible harm to the conservation area.