

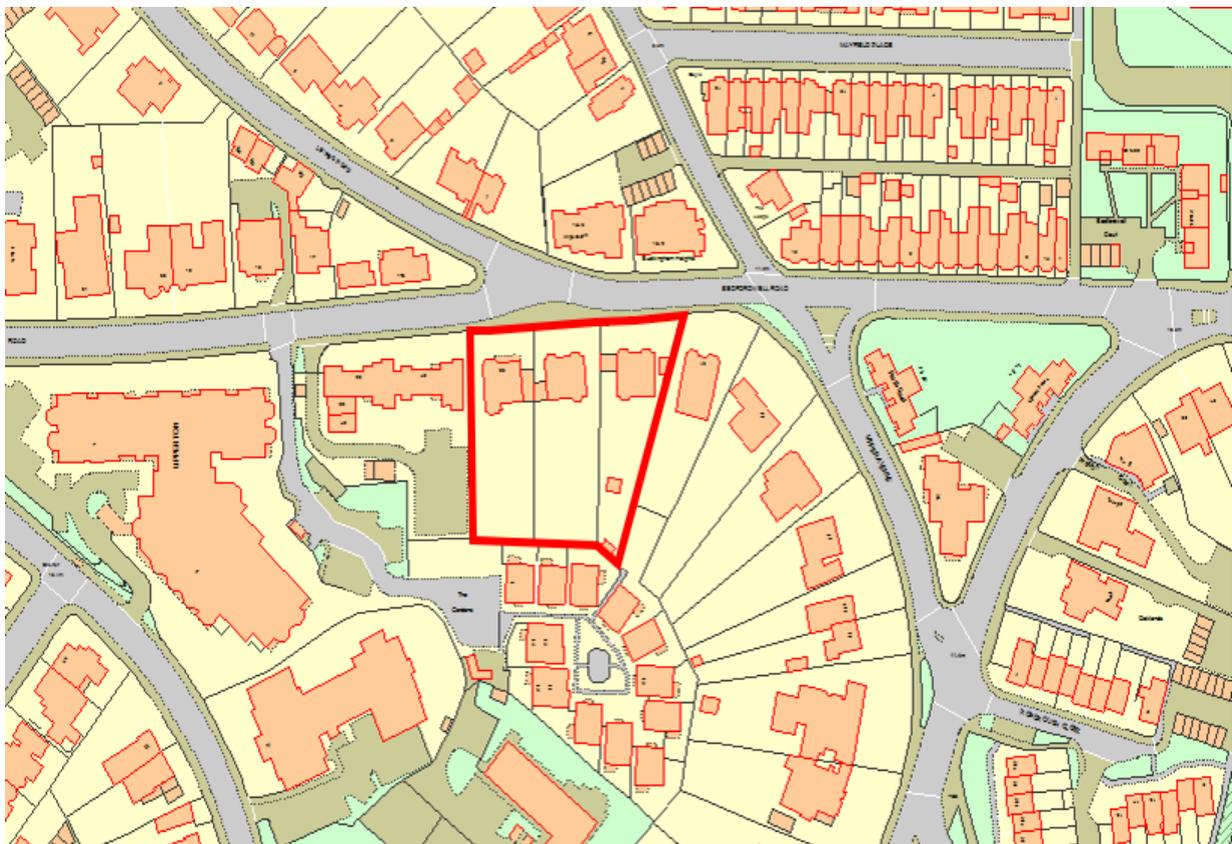
Report to: Planning Committee
Date: 14th December 2021
Application No: 210412
Location: Land at 28 to 30 Bedfordwell Road, Eastbourne
Proposal: Demolition of the existing buildings and redevelopment to provide a new care home (Use Class C2) together with associated access, car and cycle parking, landscaping and amenity space provision.

Applicant : Mr Adrian Doyle
Ward: Upperton

Recommendation: Approve conditionally, subject to legal agreement securing travel plan, local labour agreement, traffic regulation order (double yellow lines) and highway improvements.

Contact Officer: **Name:** James Smith
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Map Location:



1. **Executive Summary**

- 1.1 The proposed development is considered to serve a demonstrated need for modern care home facilities.
- 1.2 It is considered that the building, whilst large, would integrate effectively with the existing street scene, where similar size buildings are common. It is also considered that the amenities of neighbouring residents would be protected.
- 1.3 The development would include improved access arrangements that would allow for two way vehicular traffic and access by delivery, emergency and servicing vehicles.
- 1.4 The development incorporates a suitable level of sustainability and ecological/biodiversity mitigation measures.

2. **Relevant Planning Policies**

2.1 National Planning Policy Framework

- 2. Achieving sustainable development
- 4. Decision-making
- 5. Delivering a sufficient supply of homes
- 6. Building a strong, competitive economy
- 8. Promoting healthy and safe communities
- 9. Promoting sustainable transport
- 11. Making effective use of land
- 12. Achieving well-designed places
- 14. Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change

2.2 Eastbourne Core Strategy Local Plan 2006-2027:

- B1: Spatial Development Strategy and Distribution
- B2: Creating Sustainable Neighbourhoods
- C2: Upperton Neighbourhood Policy
- D1: Sustainable Development
- D5: Housing
- D7: Community Sport and Health
- D8: Sustainable Travel
- D9: Natural Environment
- D10a: Design

2.3 Eastbourne Borough Plan 2001-2011:

- NE4: Sustainable Drainage Systems
- NE7: Waste Minimisation Measures in Residential Areas

NE18: Noise
NE28: Environmental Amenity
UHT1: Design of New Development
UHT2: Height of Buildings
UHT4: Visual Amenity
UHT5: Protecting Walls/Landscape Features
UHT7: Landscaping
US3: Infrastructure Services for Foul Sewage and Surface Water Disposal
US4: Flood Protection and Surface Water Disposal
HO3: Retaining Residential Use
HO20: Residential Amenity
HO17: Supported and Special Needs Housing
TR6: Facilities for Cyclists
TR11: Car Parking

2.4 Eastbourne Employment Land Local Plan (ELLP- adopted 2016).

EL1 – Economy and Employment Land

3. **Site Description**

- 3.1 The site is currently occupied by three detached 2½-storey buildings that were originally constructed as large, single dwellinghouses. 28 Bedfordwell Road has a sizeable second floor as a result of a roof extension. All three properties have sizeable rear gardens of 35-40 metres in length. There are relatively small gaps between the buildings and these gaps have been further reduced in places where extensions have been added to the side of some of the buildings. All of the properties have dropped kerb vehicular access, taken from Bedfordwell Road.
- 3.2 28 Bedfordwell Road has extant planning permission for conversion to a 10 bedroom HMO (planning ref: 190092) Permission was recently refused for applications 190094 and 190499, which were for the construction of 2 and 1 bungalows to the rear of the main building respectively.
- 3.3 29 Bedfordwell Road has extant permission for demolition and construction of a 3½-storey building accommodating 7 x residential flats (6 x 3 bedroom, 1 x 2 bedroom) approved under application 180275.
- 3.4 30 Bedfordwell Road is currently occupied by a therapist, having been converted from a residential dwelling to this use in 1997 under planning permission 960402. Permission was granted for it to be converted back to a single dwelling in 2001 under application 010165 but this does not appear to have been implemented.
- 3.5 Surrounding buildings are generally large structures, a significant proportion of which are 3 or 4-storeys in height. These include large residential

dwellings, terraces of dwellings, purpose built blocks of flats and purpose built care homes, including 'The Hawthorns' and Sovereign Lodge Care Centre which are to the west of the site. To the rear of the site, set back from surrounding roads, is a group of 10 bungalows and 4 two-storey maisonettes which make up The Gardens sheltered housing complex.

- 3.6 There are no specific planning constraints attached to the site or the immediate surrounding area. There are TPO trees adjacent to the site at 'The Gardens'

4. Relevant Planning History

- 4.1 960402 - Change of use from residential to consulting rooms and associated offices and stores (Class A2) – Approved Conditionally 23rd January 1997 (30 Bedfordwell Road)
- 4.2 000559 - Change of use from Class A2 (consulting rooms) to Class C2 (residential institution) to provide a private residential psychiatric clinic and home for the assessment, treatment and rehabilitation of patients with mental health problems. – Approved Conditionally 14th February 2001 (30 Bedfordwell Road)
- 4.3 010165 - Proposed change of use from consulting rooms (Class A2) to single private dwelling (Class C3) – Approved Conditionally 15th May 2001 (30 Bedfordwell Road)
- 4.4 140172 - Change of use from sui generis (hostel) to single private dwelling – Approved Conditionally 9th May 2014 (29 Bedfordwell Road)
- 4.5 150443 - Outline application (with Appearance, Landscaping and Scale reserved) for demolition of existing hostel and erection of 6 x 3 bedroomed flats - consideration of access and layout only. (amended to reduce the number of units and alter layout within the site) – Refused 6th November 2015 – Appeal Allowed 27th September 2016 (29 Bedfordwell Road)
- 4.6 171161 - Application for approval of reserved matters (Appearance, Scale and Landscaping) following outline approval granted on appeal dated 27 September 2016 for the demolition of existing building and erection of 6 x 3 bed Flats (Ref: 150443) – Approved Conditionally 5th September 2017 (29 Bedfordwell Road)
- 4.7 180725 - Demolition of existing building and erection of 7 flats with associated hard and soft landscaping – Approved Conditionally 6th July 2018 (29 Bedfordwell Road)
- 4.8 190092 - Change of use to 10 bed HMO (Sui Generis) to provide accommodation for no more than 20 persons – Approved Conditionally 3rd June 2019 (28 Bedfordwell Road)
- 4.9 190094 – Construction of two bungalows – Refused 31st May 2019 (28 Bedfordwell Road)

5. Proposed Development

- 5.1 The proposed development involves the demolition of the existing buildings occupying the three plots that make up the site area, the amalgamation into

one plot and the erection of a T-shaped 3½-storey residential care home. The care home would accommodate 70 x bedrooms and would include specialist facilities for people with dementia as well as a number of internal and external communal facilities. The third floor of the building would accommodate staff facilities and offices and would be formed entirely within the roof space.

- 5.2 The proposed building would have a footprint of approx. 1245 m². The T shaped floorplan would be orientated with the horizontal section flanking Bedfordwell Road and the vertical section projecting towards the rear of the site. The ridge and eaves height of the building would vary due to the articulation in the design but the majority of the building would have a ridge height of between 12.4 and 12.5 metres other than the recessed part of the frontage on the part of the site currently occupied by 28 Bedfordwell Road, where the ridge height would increase to approx. 14.2 metres. General eaves height would be approx. 9.75 metres.
- 5.3 On site car parking would be provided to the rear of the frontage section of the building, towards the western site boundary. A total of 23 x car parking spaces would be provided, two of which would be equipped with electric vehicle charging points and two of which would be provided as disabled bays. The parking area would be accessed from Bedfordwell Road via the existing unauthorised access to 28 Bedfordwell Road which would be improved to ESCC Highway standards and widened.
- 5.4 An outdoor amenity space would be provided to the eastern side of the building and this area would also support additional landscape planting. Various ancillary buildings would be provided, predominantly to the rear of the site. This would include bike and bin storage, plant housing and a potting shed. A new substation facility required to serve the development would be positioned to the front of the building towards the north-eastern corner of the site.

6. Consultations

6.1 Specialist Advisor (Regeneration)

- 6.1.1 The planning application identifies the creation of 50 full time and 30 part time jobs, with approximately 20 – 25 staff on shift at any one time.
- 6.1.2 The construction of the development will provide temporary, short term employment and increased spend in the supply chain. It is hoped the developer, a major established provider with a property portfolio of 65 communities, including the local on-site Hawthorns Retirement Village, would observe the Local Employment and Training Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) and offer a number of construction sub-contracts to local East Sussex SMEs.
- 6.1.3 The planning policy statement highlights the provision of community rooms by prior arrangement to local and public community groups. These are likely to be of interest to local not for profit employment support partners who frequently seek venues for workshops for the unemployed.

6.1.4 In accordance with page 11 of the Local Employment and Training SPD, adopted November 2016, the proposed development meets the threshold for a commercial development qualifying for a local labour agreement at both the construction and initial operational phases.

6.1.5 Regeneration requests that should the above application gain planning permission it be subject to a local labour agreement. If approved it is recommended the Avery Healthcare Group engage with Regeneration prior to commencement of development to maximise local sub-contracting opportunities and to enable preparation of the local workforce for jobs in the construction and operational phases of development.

6.2 Specialist Advisor (Planning Policy)

6.2.1 Providing the proposal meets the criteria of HO17, there is no objection in principle from a planning policy perspective to the application.

6.3 ESCC Highways

6.3.1 Objection removed following amendments to access to allow for suitable visibility splays and textured paving. Full comments and list of recommended conditions to be provided in the committee addendum.

7. **Neighbour Representations**

7.1 Two letters of objection received, the contents of which are summarised below:-

7.1.1 Increase in traffic and parking pressure.

7.1.2 Loss of architectural heritage.

7.1.3 Overdevelopment of the site given the size of the existing buildings.

7.1.4 Loss of green space to the rear.

7.2 Three neutral letters received, the contents of which are summarised below:-

7.2.1 Support the principle of development but important that any development includes parking for employees, visitors and residents.

7.2.2 Concern that construction traffic would cause disruption.

7.2.3 The height of the building should not exceed that of the existing buildings occupying the site.

7.2.4 Important that planting is carried out to maintain privacy of neighbouring sites.

8. **Appraisal**

8.1 Principle of Development

8.1.1 The proposal involves the development of garden land. It is noted that, whilst the site is within the built-up area, the National Planning

Policy Framework (NPPF) does not regard residential gardens as previously developed land. Para. 70 states that 'plans should consider the case for setting out policies to resist inappropriate development of residential gardens, for example where development would cause harm to the local area,' whilst para. 120 instructs Local Planning Authorities, when considering planning applications that increase residential density, to pay regard to 'the desirability of maintaining an area's prevailing character and setting (including residential gardens). This does not preclude development of such sites but does instruct for increased weight to be afforded in terms of the impact of the proposed development on the established character of the surrounding area.

- 8.1.2 The Revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) directs Local Planning Authorities to adopt a presumption in favour of sustainable development. One of the three overarching objectives, that form the components of sustainable development, is a social objective (para. 8 b). The social objective requires the support of 'strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by fostering a well-designed and safe built environment, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities' health, social and cultural well-being.' The retention of care facilities at the site is considered to support the continued presence of a mixed community in the surrounding area, promoting cohesion and interaction between different elements of the community and, thereby, improving community well-being.
- 8.1.3 Para. 61 of the NPPF provides further context, stating that 'the size, type and tenure of housing needed for different groups in the community should be assessed and reflected in planning policies (including... older people...and... people with disabilities). This social objective is recognised by Policy D7 of the Eastbourne Core Strategy, which states that 'The Council will work with other relevant organisations to ensure that appropriate health care facilities, including new provision and enhancements to existing facilities, are provided in the most appropriate locations to meet existing and anticipated local needs.'
- 8.1.4 Saved policy HO17 of the Eastbourne Borough Plan supports the development of residential care homes, subject to proximity to public transport, shops, open spaces, entertainment and community facilities as well as on the proviso that the property is suitable for the use and there is provision of adequate parking.
- 8.1.5 Saved policy HO3 of the Eastbourne Borough Plan maintains that planning permission will not be granted for development which would result in the net loss of the number of residential units previously committed. There are currently extant approvals for the construction of 7 flats at 29 Bedfordwell Road and the conversion of 28 Bedfordwell Road to a 10 bedroom HMO. From a housing needs

perspective, the HMO is not regarded as forming a net increase in residential units as per the Housing Flows Reconciliation (HFR) DELTA User Guide (2020) which states that 'an (an HMO), if they were a house before, cannot be counted as a net additional dwelling, as they would have been counted as a net additional dwelling in a previous year..' As such, the loss of residential units as a result of the proposed scheme is 9 units (dwelling at No. 30 + 7 flats approved at No. 29 + HMO at No. 28).

- 8.1.6 Para. 041 of the Planning Practice Guidance for Housing Supply and Delivery (2019) confirms that communal accommodation (which includes care homes) can count towards the housing delivery test. The contribution is based on ratios set in the Housing Delivery Test Measurement Rule Book (2018). The contribution in terms of net dwellings is calculated as the net increase in bedrooms divided by the average number of adults in households in England. The current average figure is based on the 2011 census and is set at 1.8 adults per household. As such, the net amount of units provided as a result of the proposed development would be 39 units (rounded up).
 - 8.1.7 As such, the proposed development would represent a gain in residential units rather than a loss, including when factoring units committed under extant planning conditions.
 - 8.1.8 The principle of the development is therefore considered to be acceptable, subject to assessment against relevant local and national planning policies and legislation.
- 8.2 Need for Proposed Use and Loss of A2 Use at 30 Bedfordwell Road
- 8.2.1 The applicant has submitted a comprehensive needs assessment as a means to demonstrate the requirement for a facility of the size proposed in Eastbourne. The report is informed by data relating to a 'target area' incorporating all areas within a 5 mile radius of the site.
 - 8.2.2 The report note that the age profile in the target area is significantly higher than the national average and that the average age in the area is likely to continue to rise.
 - 8.2.3 The report identifies a total of 53 care homes within the target area but goes on to note that only 4 of these homes have been purpose built since the turn of the century and draws attention to the number of small, converted homes that make up the total number and the pressures they are under in terms of meeting required standards.
 - 8.2.4 The report also notes the COVID19 pandemic and the impact this has had on care homes. It states that larger and more modern facilities such as the proposed development can lock down more effectively due to the range of facilities available within the building and that individual occupants can isolate more easily due to the provision of en-suite facilities in each room.
 - 8.2.5 The report concludes that, whilst there are 1,738 registered bed spaces in the target area, only 1,139 of these are en-suite, suggesting an undersupply of 275 en-suite rooms which is expected

to increase to 477 by 2025. It states that whilst there are other pipeline care homes in the target area, their impact is likely to be offset by the attrition of existing small care homes within the area. Attention is also drawn to the specialist care for dementia patients that the proposed facility would provide.

- 8.2.6 Whilst the development would occupy a site where there is extant permission for the provision of flats it is important to note that it would provide residential accommodation and that the availability of care facilities may free up existing family houses that are currently occupied by people who may move into the proposed care home.
- 8.2.7 No. 30 Bedfordwell Road is currently occupied by a health treatment centre. Whilst policy D7 of the Core Strategy resists the loss of health facilities this has to be balanced against the benefits in terms of care offered by the proposed development. It is also considered that the services offered by the existing facility are likely to be accessed from a wide catchment and are not seen as essential to the immediate locality. As such, it is considered that the existing facility could be relocated without depriving the community of an essential service.
- 8.2.8 The proposed care home is projected to create 50 full time and 30 part time jobs that would offset any loss of employment from the removal of the facility at 30 Bedfordwell Road. The Council's Regeneration Officer has also noted that community rooms would be provided and that these are likely to be of interest to local not for profit employment support partners who frequently seek venues for workshops for the unemployed.
- 8.2.9 It is therefore considered that there is sufficient demand in place for the proposed facility and that the benefits it would contribute in terms of care, community facilities and employment outweigh the loss of residential dwellings and the existing health facility.
- 8.3 Impact of the proposed development on amenity of adjoining occupiers and the surrounding area:
- 8.3.1 At it's closest point, the eastern (side) elevation of the proposed building would reach within approx. 6.85 metres of the western flank elevation of No. 31 Bedfordwell Road, a 2½-storey building that has been subdivided into flats (including through the provision of a 3-storey rear extension and valley roof infill). Due to the orientation of the buildings, the amount of separation increases moving towards the front of the plot. There are windows within the side elevation of 31 Bedfordwell Road that would face towards the proposed building. These are largely kitchen and bathroom windows where reduced outlook would not be considered to compromise overall living conditions within the flats they serve. However, it is considered the distance retained between the buildings and the orientation of the windows would allow for continued access to a good level of natural light in any case.

- 8.3.2 Planning records also show ground, and first floor level bedroom windows within the side elevation of No. 31 as well as roof lights serving a second floor lounge area. These are positioned towards the front of the building where a greater level of space is provided between it and the proposed structure and unobstructed views within a 45 degree angle available. It is therefore considered that the bedroom windows would have access to good levels of natural light and outlook whilst the roof lights would be unaffected in any case as they are angled upwards.
- 8.3.3 Windows included within the eastern elevation of the frontage building, facing towards No. 31, would be restricted to those serving hallways and stairwells and so would not present an overlooking concern.
- 8.3.4 The neighbouring building to the west of the proposed development is occupied by flats. Its eastern flank elevation does not contain any windows or openings other than high level windows serving bathrooms.
- 8.3.5 The recessed rear projection of the building would include bedroom windows facing towards No. 31. This part of the building would be set back from the side boundary by approx. 16.5 metres to the front part of the site, reducing to approx. 9.5 metres at the far end due to the tapering nature of the boundaries. None of these windows would look directly towards neighbouring windows and would instead overlook the landscaped garden of the development and, beyond that, the communal garden area serving the neighbouring flats. Due to the partial screening of the neighbouring garden by landscaping and boundary treatment, its communal use and the high levels of surveillance over amenity space that is common in densely built up areas such as the locality of the site, it is not considered that the proposed development would introduce unacceptably intrusive views towards No. 31 Bedfordwell Road. The level of set back is also considered to prevent an unacceptable overbearing relationship or undue levels of overshadowing of the communal garden.
- 8.3.6 Bedroom windows on the western side of the rear projection would overlook the car parking area of the neighbouring flats. Bedroom and amenity room windows facing towards The Gardens to the south would be provided only in the frontage element of the building, with approx. 40 metres maintained at the closest point between the proposed windows and the nearest neighbouring properties at The Gardens. Windows within the southern elevation of the rear projection, which reaches within approx. 16 metres of The Gardens, would be restricted to those serving stairwells and so would not introduce realistic potential for sustained overlooking.
- 8.3.7 The far end of the rear projection, closest to The Gardens, steps down in height and also reduces in width. Given the reduction in scale and the distance of 16 metres maintained between it and the nearest neighbouring property at 'The Gardens' it is not considered that it would introduce an unacceptable overbearing impact,

Overshadowing would not be at an unacceptable level due the degree of separation maintained and the positioning of the proposed building to the north of The Gardens.

- 8.3.8 The proposed use would be more intensive than the existing use of the buildings although it would not be considered significantly different in nature and intensity to the flatted developments and other care homes that are a common presence in the surrounding environment. The servicing and parking areas as well as the access are considered to be positioned sympathetically so as to minimise impact upon neighbouring residents. A planning condition will be used to secure a maintenance and management plan to include details of procedures to be followed to reduce nuisance to neighbours as a result of noise, light or air pollution. A condition to secure details of hard and soft landscaping would also be applied to any approval given and it would be expected for the landscaping scheme to incorporate sympathetic screening of the development.
- 8.3.9 It is therefore considered that the proposed development is compatible with the surrounding residential environment in terms of activities carried out and the intensity of those activities and that the presence of the building would not result in any unacceptable harm against the existing amenities enjoyed by neighbouring residents.

8.4 Quality of Accommodation Provided

- 8.4.1 The Council does not have any specific adopted standards for care home development in terms of unit size. However, para. 130 (f) of the NPPF states that planning decisions should help create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users; and where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion and resilience.
- 8.4.2 All bedrooms and primary amenity areas within the proposed building have access to clear glazed windows with a good level of outlook and exposure to natural light and effective natural ventilation. The multiple aspect form of the development would ensure that there is access to natural light throughout the day.
- 8.4.3 The layout of the building is clear and uncluttered with all corridors being wide, awkwardly shaped rooms avoided and a communal rooms provided within close proximity of either of the two lifts which provide step free access to all floors of the building.
- 8.4.4 Interior and exterior communal amenity space will be provided and it is considered that this would encourage social interaction as well as support the provision of a wide range of activities on site, thereby enhancing its sustainability. These facilities include those tailored towards occupants who have dementia.
- 8.4.5 A crime prevention statement was included as part of the suite of documents provided with the application. This statement notes the high level of natural surveillance provided over all communal areas and access routes to the site, the provision of defensible space in

the form of landscaping and boundary treatment, the provision of access controls and security and the 24 hour presence of staff on site. Access to external communal space would be via the building only, ensuring it is fully accessible to occupants but not to the wider public.

8.4.6 It is therefore considered that the proposed development satisfies the objectives set out in para. 130 (f).

8.5 Design

8.5.1 The existing buildings are not subject to any special designations and are not considered to possess any significant architectural merit. It is noted that permission has already been granted by the Planning Inspectorate for the demolition of 29 Bedfordwell Road and its replacement with a block of flats under 150443.

8.5.2 Three and four-storey buildings are a common presence within the surrounding area, including the flats on the adjoining plot at 26 – 27 Bedfordwell Road (three-storey), the nearby care home at the Hawthorns (four-storey) and the buildings currently occupying the site (two and 2½-storey). The height of the eaves and ridge of the proposed building will be approx. 3 metres above those of the existing buildings, with the increased height of the western section reflecting the increased height of 28 Bedfordwell Road in comparison to numbers 29 and 30, and approx. 1.5 metres higher than the block of flats approved at No. 29 under 180275. The existing buildings occupy the majority of the width of their respective plots. As such, it is considered that the wide frontage of the proposed could be compatible with the spatial characteristics of the surrounding area.

8.5.3 The building frontage has been articulated so as to maintain a sense of three separate buildings, albeit that they are interconnected across the site. This articulation also helps to break up the bulk and mass of the building, thereby preventing it from appearing overbearing or oppressive within the street scene, and also allows for the incorporation of distinctive architectural elements, including strong gable end projections, that help the proposed building to integrate with surrounding buildings that have similar features as well as increase the level of engagement with the street scene.

8.5.4 The building has four storeys and, whilst taller than the existing dwellings occupying the site, it is consistent with the height of a number of nearby properties, including the care home at The Hawthorns, which occupies a far greater ratio of its plot than the proposed development does. The fourth storey would be accommodated within the roof space, as is common with similar scale buildings on Bedfordwell Road and Carew Road. As such, the eaves height would not be excessive and the pitched roof, which slopes away from the highway, would assimilate with the existing roofscape of pitched roofing of varied heights which is a character of the street scene.

- 8.5.5 It is considered that the mixed palette of external finishes would also help break up the mass of the building. The upper floors would be predominantly clad in tile hanging which would contrast with the brick finish of the lower floors. String courses would also be used to prevent overly monotonous sections of brickwork as well as to provide definition to the building.
- 8.5.6 The building would set back from the road, allowing space for landscaping to the front which will contribute towards the street landscaping that is characteristic of Bedfordwell Road. The existing building line would also be respected, with the staggered frontage reflecting the angle of the road. Sufficient open space would be maintained to the sides of the building to prevent the plot from appearing cramped. The depth of the frontage section of the building would be similar to neighbouring properties and the rear projection would be stepped well in from the side boundaries of the plot, ensuring it does not appear overly bulky in comparison to them.
- 8.5.7 The distinctive low flint and brick wall to the front of the existing dwellings will be maintained and, where existing openings are to be closed off, this will be achieved by extending the wall using matching materials and design. The car parking area would be discretely positioned behind the frontage element and, as such, parked cars would have a minimal presence within the street scene. The parking area would be hard surfaced but would incorporate landscaping and a garden space would also be provided to the rear of the building, helping to retain a sense of the green space currently present to the rear of the site.
- 8.5.8 The site plan shows the footprint of a substation although no further details of its design have been provided. It would be positioned to the front of the site where it would have the potential to appear incongruous if not of a sympathetic design and scale. A condition will therefore be used to secure full details of the substation prior to it being installed. It is noted that the Distribution Network Operator (DNO) will have certain requirements in this regard. Provided the substation is sympathetically designed and screened it is not considered that it would have an unacceptable impact upon visual amenity.
- 8.5.9 It is therefore considered that the large scale of the proposed building is consistent with the street scene and the wider surrounding environment.

8.6 Highways and Parking

- 8.6.1 The proposed development would utilise the existing access to the side of No. 28 Bedfordwell Road. The existing access is unauthorised and does not include a dropped kerb crossover. Two existing gated dropped kerb crossovers, serving No. 29 and No. 30 Bedfordwell Road respectively, would be permanently closed off.
- 8.6.2 The access to Bedfordwell Road would be widened to provide a 6 metre carriageway, allowing two way vehicular movements as well

as access be emergency and service vehicles. A dropped kerb crossover would be provided onto Bedfordwell Road. The access would pass between the proposed building and the neighbouring flats before emerging into a car parking area a relatively short distance to the south.

- 8.6.3 The parking area would incorporate a total of 23 car parking spaces which is considered to be adequate to accommodate the needs of staff and visitors without resulting in unacceptable risk of overspill onto the surrounding highway network. Two disabled bays would be included and would be located close to the entrance lobby so as to enhance accessibility. All parking bays meet ESCC standards in terms of dimensions and adequate space is provided to allow for vehicle to manoeuvre into each space.
- 8.6.4 Six cycle parking spaces would also be provided as a means to encourage access to the site by bicycle. This would contribute towards the Green Travel Plan that the applicant will be required to submit to ESCC Highways and implement thereafter, with monitoring carried out to ensure that the use of sustainable modes of transport is being encouraged and adopted. Notwithstanding the submitted plans, the cycle parking must be secure and covered in order to provide an acceptable degree of weather protection and security and, therefore, final details of the cycle store would be secured by condition.
- 8.6.5 Pedestrian access is provided from Bedfordwell Road to the main entrance lobby, with a footway running alongside the access road and continuing into the car parking area. As such, pedestrians will be able to safely access the site without coming into conflict with moving vehicles.
- 8.6.6 Tracking diagrams have been provided to confirm that emergency, delivery and servicing vehicles can access the site and turn within the car parking area, allowing them to enter and leave in forward gear and therefore preventing any unacceptable hazard caused by reversing vehicles. This also ensures that refuse crews are able to easily access the bin store provided within the parking area.
- 8.6.7 ESCC Highways were involved in pre-application discussions with the applicant. The intensity of the use of the existing access will significant increase from the 5 trips per day likely to be associated with the continued use of No. 28 to up to 175 trips per day associated with the proposed development. In terms of Highway impact it is not considered that the increased trip rates would result in unacceptable congestion, particularly with adequate parking and access arrangements provided on-site. However, negotiations have been ongoing in regards to the visibility splays required at the site access due to a concern that parked cars may impeded this. In response to these concerns, the applicant has agreed to use a Traffic Regulation Order to provide double yellow lines along 12 metres of the southern side of Bedfordwell Road, extending from the western edge of the access. ESCC highways are satisfied that the

removal of parked cars from this section of the carriageway would allow for appropriate visibility of oncoming cars and address highway safety concerns.

- 8.6.8 The extended double yellow lines would result in the loss of approx. 2 x on street car parking spaces but this is not considered to be a degree of loss that would result in unacceptable parking stress on the surrounding highway network.
- 8.6.9 The applicant has also commissioned a Stage 1 Road Safety Audit which identifies the access as a potential hazard to sight impaired pedestrians. In response, tactile paving would be provided across the full width of the site access at a minimum depth of 1200mm as a means to identify the presence of the access to sight impaired pedestrians.
- 8.6.10 Due to the ongoing negotiations, formal comments from ESCC Highways have not yet been submitted although the officer has confirmed that the scheme is now acceptable from a highway perspective. These will be provided in the committee addendum along with recommended conditions.

8.7 Landscaping

- 8.7.1 Although the frontage of the development would be built largely over the footprint of the existing buildings and associated hardstanding, the rear projection would extend over an area that is currently green space, in the form of amenity grassland and ornamental planting.
- 8.7.2 The application is accompanied by a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal which notes that the garden area provides limited habitat function due to its enclosure (and subsequent lack of connectivity) and the traditional regular maintenance of the lawn and plants. However, a Bat Scoping Report submitted as part of the application does suggest that the existing buildings offer a degree of bat roost potential due to the presence of loose tiles and other openings that may allow bats access into the roof space of those buildings. The scoping report recommends bat emergence surveys are carried out before any commencement of demolition works so as to establish whether there are any bats present. This will be secured by planning condition.
- 8.7.3 No significant trees would be removed as a result of the proposed works, with those lost being restricted to self seeded or ornamental planting that does not have any significant visual amenity or habitat value. The site landscaping plan shows that mature hedge and landscaping to the front of the site being maintained, with existing gaps in the hedge being planted up. Some cutting back would be carried out as would be expected for boundary hedging adjacent to the road but it is considered that the existing landscaped appearance to the front of the site would be retained and enhanced overall through the new planting being proposed.
- 8.7.4 There are mature trees to the rear of the site on a grass verge area adjacent to The Gardens sheltered accommodation development.

These trees are covered by a Preservation Order (TPO55) although a number of trees that were on the original order have since been removed to accommodate The Gardens. The arboricultural impact assessment issued with the application states that roots from trees adjacent to the site boundary are unlikely to encroach into the site due to the presence of an intervening retaining wall. However, inspections for roots would be made whilst excavating the car park area and, if they are found, then no dig zones would be established to protect the trees affected. A single horse chestnut tree which overhangs the site was found to be in poor condition and, as it overhangs the car park, is recommended for removal. Whilst the loss is regrettable it is considered there are sound reasons to justify it and it is not considered that the tree, as an individual, possesses any significant amenity or habitat value. It is considered that the proposed planting that forms the site landscaping scheme would mitigate the loss as new trees planted would mature and ultimately visually integrate with the TPO trees to the rear of the site, maintaining the existing verdant character.

- 8.7.5 The Preliminary Ecological Appraisal identifies a number of Reasonable Avoidance Measures (RAMs) that should be taken to mitigate impact upon ecology and biodiversity. This includes provision of bat and bird boxes (including specialist boxes integrated into the building for use by bats and swifts), native planting and mammal gates under fences. Recommendations are also made at the construction stage including supervision of clearance works by a qualified ecologist, wildlife briefings to construction workers and covering of excavations overnight to prevent animals falling in.
- 8.7.6 Details of hard landscaping are also included on the submitted landscape plan and this includes the use of permeable paving over most hard surfaced areas, allowing for improved drainage capacity, the retention and extension of the existing flint and brick boundary wall to the front of the site and screening to outdoor amenity areas.
- 8.7.7 Overall, it is considered that the proposed scheme, whilst resulting in the loss of garden land, would maintain a verdant character to the front and rear of the site. Impact on ecology is considered to be minimal due to the site having little identified ecological value and recommended planting and habitat creation is likely to contribute towards biodiversity enhancement.

8.8 Drainage and Flood Risk

- 8.8.1 The application is accompanied by an interim drainage strategy and management plan. The drainage strategy is based on Sustainable Drainage Principles, with the hierarchy set out in para. 080 of the Planning Practice Guidance for Flood Risk and Coastal Change.
- 8.8.2 The strategy discounts the use of infiltration drainage due to the geology of the land below and around the site. As there are no water bodies nearby it is intended that surface water would be discharged into the public sewer. The strategy states that surface water from the

site currently discharges into the sewer at a rate that is estimated to be 7.5 litres per second based on rainfall intensity of 50mm per hour.

- 8.8.3 It is stated that the proposed drainage infrastructure would offer a betterment to this rate, using permeable paving and attenuation tanks to control the rate of discharge to approx. 5 litres per second (with a 30% increase in rain intensity as a result of climate change factored in). Final details of the proposed arrangement would need to be confirmed by the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) and evidence of a connection agreement with Southern Water for the use of the sewer and agreed discharge rate would also need to be provided. These details would be secured by way of a planning condition.

8.9 Sustainability

- 8.9.1 The proposed car parking area would be provided with 2 x electric vehicle charging points as a means to encourage the use of low carbon transport. Cycle parking facilities would also be provided and an overarching Green Travel Plan, that sets out quantifiable targets to encourage the use of sustainable modes of transport to access and service the site, would be secured by section 106 agreement. The effectiveness of the Travel Plan would be monitored and this would inform adjustments that could be made to the plan throughout its lifetime.
- 8.9.2 The site is considered to be in a sustainable location, in relatively close proximity to bus stops that are frequently served by routes that connect with other parts of the town (including the railway station) as well as to surrounding towns and villages. The surrounding residential area provides a potential source of staff within close proximity of the site. The size of the facility provided allows for the provision of a number of facilities to support occupants and staff including a cinema room, café, lounge area, hairdressers and laundry which provide a level of self sufficiency and sustainability. It is also noted that many of the communal rooms would be made available for hire to members of the wider surrounding community and, as such, improve facilities available to nearby residents and the sustainability of the wider neighbourhood.
- 8.9.3 An energy and sustainability statement submitted with the application confirms that a combined heat and power (CHP) system would be installed within the building. This facility would generate electricity for use in the building and the heat associated with the production of the electricity would then be used to heat the building. The CHP would be powered by gas rather than renewable energy but it is noted that their use can reduce carbon emissions by up to 30% compared to the separate means of conventional generation via a boiler and power station. As per Government Guidance for Combined Heat and Power.
- 8.9.4 A waste management statement has been provided as part of the application. This statement sets out how demolition and construction

waste would be reused or recycled where possible. Examples include utilising brick and rubble waste as hardcore either within the site or sold on to other developers, recycling of metal waste, potential use of timber waste as pellets for power generation and use of green waste as mulch to support the new site landscaping.

- 8.9.5 It is therefore considered that the site is sustainable in terms of its location, facilities provided and accessibility and that suitable efforts have been made at the design stage to reduce carbon emissions and the amount of waste going to landfill.

9. **Human Rights Implications**

- 9.1 The impacts of the proposal have been assessed as part of the application process. Consultation with the community has been undertaken and the impact on local people is set out above. The human rights considerations have been taken into account fully in balancing the planning issues; and furthermore the proposals will not result in any breach of the Equalities Act 2010.

10. **Recommendation**

- 10.1 Approve subject to the conditions listed below and a section 106 legal agreement to secure a travel plan, local labour agreement, traffic regulation order and highway improvements.
- 10.2 Conditions:
- 10.3 Time Limit.
- 10.4 Approved Plans.
- 10.5 Details of sustainable drainage system.
- 10.6 Bat emergence survey.
- 10.7 Implementation of RAMs listed in Preliminary Ecological Assessment.
- 10.8 Construction Environment Management Plans.
- 10.9 Surfacing and marking out of parking and turning areas.
- 10.10 Electric vehicle parking.
- 10.11 Access improved to ESCC standards.
- 10.12 Sustainable drainage scheme.
- 10.13 Protection of trees.
- 10.14 Implementation of landscaping plan.
- 10.15 Full details of CHP and installation.
- 10.16 Cycle parking and bin storage details.
- 10.17 External lighting details.
- 10.18 Management and maintenance plan for facility.
- 10.19 Substation details.

11. **Appeal**

11.1 Should the applicant appeal the decision the appropriate course of action to be followed, taking into account the criteria set by the Planning Inspectorate, is considered to be written representations.

12. **Background Papers**

12.1 None.