

Plan: A DC/05/00568/FUL Goresbrook & River Wards (A)

Address: Allotments north of Darcy Gardens and east of Coombes Road, Dagenham.

Development: Erection of 2 storey 'extra care' building for the elderly comprising 31 one bedroom flats and five two bedroom flats together with associated communal facilities and 10 one bedroom bungalows and 6 two bedroom bungalows for the elderly together with associated car parking and vehicular access from Coombes Road including the demolition of no's 60 and 62 Coombes Road.

Applicant: Hanover Housing Association.

Introduction and Description of Development

This application proposes the erection of a 2 storey building for the elderly comprising 36 flats, 16 bungalows and includes the demolition of 60 and 62 Coombes Road. The proposed scheme is intended to cater for the over 55's, specifically the frail elderly who cannot live independently, except for 7 of the bungalows which will be occupied by wheelchair users.

The application site comprises a former non-statutory allotment plot enclosed on all four sides by residential dwellings on Darcy Gardens (29-49), Coombes Road (46-94 even), Heathway (67-103 odd) and Arnold Road (55-103 odd). The site also includes no's 60 and 62 Coombes Road, the demolition of which would afford vehicular and pedestrian access to the site. The site benefits from a number of pedestrian access points which are currently closed.

Background

The site has not served as allotments for a considerable period of time and is presently vacant.

Consultations

a) Adjoining Occupiers.

- a) 138 local residents were consulted, one notice placed in the Barking and Dagenham Post and 2 site notices erected around the site. 1 letter commenting upon the scheme and two petitions objecting to the scheme were received; one petition was signed by 75 residents in 74 properties and one signed by 55 residents in 40 properties. Neighbours concerns can be summarised as:

Petition – signed by 75 residents expressing concern at the proposed wind turbines.
Petition -- signed by 55 residents 'there are a number of concerns namely traffic increase to a minor road, access for emergency services and lack of parking facilities for the residents of Coombes Road'

One responder commented that although they do not in principle object to the proposals made they have issues of grave concern. Lack of detail regarding the wind turbines, their ability to create persistent noise levels causing noise nuisance, and their unsightliness.

A substantial part of the objections relates to a lack of consultation undertaken by the Council with regards to the scheme. However, in addition to the consultation on the planning application above, public consultation was undertaken by the Housing Department taking the form of public meetings and presentations.

b) Metropolitan Police Service

No objection.

c) Essex and Suffolk Water

No objection.

d) English Heritage

No objection.

e) Environmental Management Division

No objection.

f) Traffic and Road Safety Division.

No objection.

g) London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority

No objection.

UDP Policy

H1	Housing Supply
H4	Low cost housing
H6	Housing for People with Disabilities
H13 - H17	New Residential Development Standards
G40	Energy
G70	Allotments

No Policy issue.

Analysis

Council Policy as contained in the Unitary Development Plan promotes the construction of high quality residential development that will improve the physical environment whilst contributing to the housing aspirations of the community. This development would create 52 new residential units, the large majority of which will be for the frail/ elderly over 55 age group, whilst seven bungalow units will be retained for wheelchair users of all ages. The proposed scheme represents a significant contribution towards the Borough and regional housing targets for elderly and disabled housing provision.

Use

The principle of the change of use of this land from an allotment site to land suitable for residential use is acceptable. The site is no longer on the Council's list of temporary allotment sites and, therefore, the change of use of the site would not have a negative impact on the level of allotment provision in Barking and Dagenham.

Policy G70 stipulates that the development of such land for housing would only be supported if the following are already satisfied: (i) in areas of open space deficiency, the Council should encourage such provision (ii) the Council will encourage locally required community facilities. On the issue of Open Space provision, the site lies close to King Georges Field and Old Dagenham Park and other open spaces, notably Goresbrook Park, are within walking distance. In respect of local community facilities, a combination of the School development programme and the LIFT scheme has improved the level of education and healthcare facilities on offer to the existing and new residents.

Members will be aware that a health centre has recently opened on Morland Road incorporating facilities for GP consulting rooms, nurse practitioners, x-ray and ultrasound examination facilities, chiropody suite and mental health clinic. A new primary health care and doctors surgery is also on the point of completion in Charlotte Road whilst Ford Road clinic is within a reasonable distance of the site.

Given the nature of the scheme, the health and ages of the intended resident group and the small number of unrestricted units involved in terms of age, there will be no appreciable affect on education services within the borough.

Amenity

It is considered that the low height of the bungalows (no greater than 4.5 metres) and the distance from the extra care block to the neighbouring residential properties (a minimum of 17.3 metres) is sufficient to avoid any amenity impact in terms of loss of light/privacy.

Any future development normally allowed by Permitted Development (PD) rights which could result in a detrimental amenity impact, such as the construction of rear dormer windows, will be restricted by the removal of 'Permitted' Development rights. Proposed gardens effectively meet garden area sizes in accordance with UDP Policy. Fifteen of the sixteen bungalows will have rear gardens in excess of Council guidelines, although one bungalow will be marginally below (48sqm rather than 50sqm). In the context of the size of the scheme this is considered acceptable in this particular instance.

The application proposes to achieve the 10% renewable energy provision through solar panels located on all proposed buildings and through the installation of four small 2m wide wind turbines. These will be located 0.5m above the eaves of the extra care block and located centrally within the site, the closest lying 31m away from the nearest residential property. It is considered that these turbines will have little visual impact, providing an additional degree of visual interest to the extra care block.

It is recognised that the need to control noise emissions from a small scale wind turbine is critical in domestic settings. Some older models of wind turbine (both small and large) have historically emitted significant noise which would be unacceptable in this setting. The model chosen for this scheme has been designed with reduced sound levels as a primary aim. The turbines proposed can be efficiently controlled and also be shut down in high wind situations (those most likely to cause unacceptable levels of noise). Aerodynamic noise is minimised by the ring diffuser which prevents the creation of turbulent vortices at

the blade tip, whilst the five blade design allows for a slower speed of rotation to further reduce noise.

A condition is recommended to protect residential amenity stipulating that noise levels resulting from the operation of the wind turbines do not rise above background noise levels at the nearest façade of adjacent houses. The detailed wording of this condition is still under consideration and will be tabled to the Board at the meeting.

Design

The scheme aims to create a new community, largely comprising accommodation for the over 60's. The flats follow the 'extra care' model whereby more comprehensive care is provided than is associated with traditional sheltered housing which allows residents who become frail to stay in their homes rather than be admitted to hospital or residential care homes. The bungalows are designed as subtle chalet style units and sit east and west of the main block.

The layout of the site is designed to provide a series of interesting spaces, the design of the entrance to the extra care block will provide a landmark to visitors entering the site. In front of this feature a public space provides a focus and meeting place for residents. The main access road bends to the north, giving access to the bungalows on the west side of the site and providing turning opportunities for service vehicles.

In contrast the main public square in front of the Extra Care block follows the home zone model which gives pedestrians priority and will incorporate trees, benches and car parking. This space leads into a pedestrian mews at the east of the Extra care block which also will provide an attractive place for residents to meet. The front doors and large living room windows of the bungalows and of the flats in the main building facing onto the public spaces encourage a sense of community and security.

The buildings themselves are designed to create a contemporary design utilising traditional materials and scale. Materials as proposed include brick and a traditional roof tiling system, which are considered acceptable. The design is seen as of a suitable quality and geared towards the intended residents. Boundary treatments will be dealt with through the imposition of conditions.

The loss of the two dwellings in Coombes Road, while regrettable, is necessary and their loss will be compensated by the addition of many new dwellings on site. Current tenants will be moved to other comparable accommodation.

The proposed layout of the scheme is considered secure and safe. All units will be to Life Time Homes standards, whilst shared private amenity space for the flats is located within an inner space and considered generous.

Sustainability

The proposed buildings will have extensive green roof coverage encouraging bio diversity within the locality. This will also reduce surface water run off and provide a greater degree of thermal insulation. The scheme will achieve 10% renewable energy usage via the use of solar panels and four small wind turbines. The scheme will also achieve "a very good" rating under BRE environmental assessment method (BREEAM).

Ecological Implications

The site does not have any designation in terms of its ecological value and in that sense no specific policies apply. However, a wildlife survey is included as a condition. This will ensure any protected wildlife are safely relocated off site.

Access & Highways

The proposal requires the provision of an access from Coombes Road. This access will require the loss of part of the grassed amenity green on Coombes Road. The applicant has committed to providing monies through a section S106 agreement enabling tree planting, high quality landscaping and formal parking arrangements to this part of Coombes Road. At present parking occurs 'on pavement', the new parking arrangements will result in no loss of parking spaces whilst improving their arrangement and effectiveness. The quality of the remaining open space should also be considerably enhanced.

It is considered that the internal highway layout is satisfactory and will provide a safe environment for vehicles and pedestrians. Road widths are sufficient to allow access by the emergency services, vehicular parking spaces are of a sufficient size and layout. 23 parking spaces are provided as part of the scheme, this represents 44% parking provision and is considered acceptable in this case as the majority of potential residents will either not have vehicles or be capable of driving them.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this development will provide essential and appropriate accommodation for the aged and elderly in Barking and Dagenham and the development should offer quality of design without compromising neighbouring amenity. It is considered that the need for this form of housing outweighs the site's existing status and that planning permission should be granted.

Recommendation

That, subject to the completion of an agreement under Section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972 whereby upon acquiring an interest in the land the developer covenants to enter into an agreement under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 in respect of a contribution of £230,000 for highways/landscape improvement works to Coombes Road, planning permission be granted subject to the following conditions:

1. F1 b) Details of soft landscaping
2. F2 Implementation of Proposed Soft landscaping.
3. F4 Hard Landscaping.
4. F8 Landscape maintenance.
5. H1 No further domestic extensions.
6. I6 Completion of Parking Areas
7. I12 Cycle Parking

8. F6 Wildlife Survey.
9. T1 Programme of excavations.
10. O1 Details of Dustbin Enclosures
11. P1 Details of Boundary Treatment
12. Q1 Details/Samples of Facing Materials
13. U1 Land Contamination Survey
14. All dwellings are to be built to Lifetime Homes Standards in accordance with the specifications set out by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation.
15. M5 Construction work.
16. M4 Hours of construction work.
17. A scheme showing the provisions to be made for external lighting shall be submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority. The approved scheme shall be implemented prior to occupation of the building and shall be retained unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.
18. Details of the proposed 'green living roof' together with a maintenance schedule shall be submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority. The living roof shall be constructed prior to the first occupation of the building in accordance with the approved details and thereafter maintained in accordance with the approved maintenance schedule.
19. The solar collectors and wind turbines, as indicated on drawing numbers 0424 P-020 revision A and P-021 revision A, shall be installed and fully operational prior to the occupation of any unit within the block on which they are situated.
20. Prior to the commencement of development the applicants shall provide calculations to show that the plant and turbine noise levels are 10 dBA below the lowest background noise level (LA90 (15 minutes)) over the proposed operating hours at a distance of 1 metre from the nearest residential window. The plant and turbines shall be installed to ensure that no perceptible noise or vibration is transmitted through the structure to adjoining premises.
21. The flood risk assessment shall be amended and formally resubmitted to the Local Planning Authority in accordance with the requirements outlined in the letter from the Environment Agency dated 28 November 2005 (ref NE/2005/01 3341-2/2) prior to the commencement of the development.