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PLANNING, DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT

The Three Chestnuts
Fen Road, Holbeach PE2 8QD

Description:

Erection of two-storey extension and use of premises as a children's care home (Use Class C2).

Applicant:

Hexagon Care Services

Date:

October 2017

Planning Statement

Contents

		Page
1	**Introduction**	2
2	**Site Description & Planning History**	3
3	**Application Proposals**	4
4	**Planning Policy Context**	6
5	**Planning Judgement**	8
6	**Conclusion**	12

Chapter 1
Introduction

1.1. De Pol Associates Ltd are retained by Hexagon Care Services to prepare a Planning Statement in support of the change of use of The Three Chestnuts, Fen Road, Holbeach to a children's care home under Use Class C2, together with the erection of a two-storey extension.

1.2. This Statement provides a description of the proposed development together with an appraisal of the planning merits of the scheme in the context of relevant planning policies / guidance.

1.3. For reasons identified in this Statement it is considered that based on planning policy and material considerations the application proposals represent appropriate development and that full planning permission ought to be granted.

Chapter 2
Site Description and Planning History

2.1. The application site comprises an existing dwelling and associated garden land sited on the junction of Fen Road with Further Old Gate. The site is largely surrounded by countryside. The eastern boundary of the site is defined by the B1168, which provides a direct connection to Holbeach approximately 2km north of the property. The southern site boundary is defined by Further Old Gate. A watercourse is located along the western boundary, with an agricultural barn / shed located on the western side of the ditch. The property has no immediate neighbours.

2.2. The subject property is a detached two-storey dwelling of traditional construction set within a large domestic garden. A detached single storey garage is located to the rear of the property, which is used for car parking / storage. Vehicular access to site is off Fen Road and the property benefits from an extensive area of hardstanding to the rear for car parking and turning space. A grass lawn is located to the front and rear of the property and the curtilage is bounded by post and rail fencing, hedgerows and scattered trees. The site is located within Flood Zone 3.

2.3. The property is currently used as a home for the residential care of four children with 24 hour care provided from a small pool of carers who operate on a shift basis. Internally, the property comprises a lounge, kitchen, computer room, staff office, six bedrooms, shower room and family bathroom. Two of the bedrooms provide sleeping accommodation for overnight care staff.

2.4. The applicant, care provider Hexagon Care Services, has operated from the property since 2010. It is understood however that the property has operated as a home for the care of up to four children since circa 2004, following the granting of a Certificate of Lawfulness which confirmed that the use of the property for the accommodation of no more than six persons would not amount to a material change of use from that of a C3 dwelling, under ref. H09-1230-04.

Chapter 3

Application Proposals

3.1. Hexagon Care Services (HCS) is an established independent care provider operating nationally, delivering a wide range of care services for young people. One of their core services is the provision of independent, individual care homes for young people under the age of 18. HCS pride themselves on ensuring that their homes are warm, nurturing places to live which encourage education, hobbies and leisure activities.

3.2. As previously highlighted, HCS has operated a small-scale residential care home from The Three Chestnuts since 2010. The existing property provides a home for up to four young people in need of care, in accordance with a Certificate of Lawfulness issued in 2004, under reference: H09-1230-04.

3.3. HCS would like to extend the property to provide additional care opportunities at this address with the provision of 2no. additional residential care spaces to allow for the care of up to six young people. It is considered that the increase in residents represents a material change of use to a care home under Class C2 of the Use Classes Order. Full planning permission is therefore sought for the erection of a two storey extension and the material change of use of the premises to a care home under Use Class C2.

3.4. The proposed extension will be erected on the southern elevation of the property. The extension is two-storeys in height with a dual pitched roof and blank gable end. The proposed windows and doors have sought to align with the fenestration throughout the host property. A canopy is proposed above the new access door which will face Fen Road. The extension will be faced in buff brick with roof tiles to reflect the existing property.

3.5. The majority of all existing boundary hedgerows and tree planting will be retained however a single tree will need to be felled to facilitate the proposed extension, as illustrated on the accompanying site plan, ref: SD1717-028/2. The existing garage and hard standing to the north of the property will continue to be used for staff car parking.

3.6. The extension will allow the provision of 2no. additional young person bedrooms, 2no. dedicated staff bedrooms with en-suite facilities and 2no. offices for use by the managerial team and care staff. Whilst there will be no internal reconfiguration of the existing property, the extension will allow former staff bedrooms to be used as additional communal living areas for the young residents.

3.7. The young people within Hexagon's care will be between the ages of 11 and 18 and of single gender. The property will be the permanent place of residence for each young person. Each young person will generally reside within the property for up to 2 years, although this is dependent on the individual circumstances of each child and could be result in longer or shorter stays. Each young person will have their own bedroom and share the communal facilities of the kitchen, lounge, bathrooms, computer room and garden space. All of the proposed residents will be in full time education which can include both mainstream school or alternative provision.

3.8. The young people will be cared for by a pool of approx. 9 full-time carers which operate on a shift basis. The carers are directly responsible for the care and welfare of the young people whilst supporting the residents with their daily routines. This includes making and having breakfast with the children and then taking them to school or out for the day, depending on the day of the week. The carers then return home with the young people and they will spend the evening together having their dinner and engaging in normal household activities. The use of the property is intended, for the benefit of the young people, to mirror the routine of a normal home.

3.9. There will be a minimum of three carers present at the property at any one time to ensure a 2:1 children:carer ratio. There will usually be a maximum of 5 carers present at the property at any one time for a period of approx. 15 minutes to allow for staff handovers. Care shifts include "sleep-ins" during evening shifts.

3.10. The operation of the home will be managed by an on-site manager and deputy manager who will operate on a full time basis, generally Monday to Friday with traditional working hours of 9:00am – 5:30pm. The manager and deputy manager may occasionally work on the weekends, if and when required.

3.11. In terms of additional visitors to the property over and above immediate care/managerial staff, any such visits would take place during daytime hours only and would be generally 'ad-hoc'. Such visits would include the relevant Local Authority social worker who, generally once every three months, would conduct a review of the children either at the property or collect a child to meet with them off-site.

3.12. The detailed proposals are illustrated on accompanying plan numbers SD17-028/2, SD17-028/3, and SD17-028/5.

3.13. The proposed care home will continue to be rated by Ofsted as per the existing situation.

Chapter 4

Planning Policy Context

4.1. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires planning applications to be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

4.2. The Development Plan for the purposes of this application comprises the saved policies of the South Holland Local Plan. Whilst a replacement Local Plan covering the period to 2036 is currently under production, this is at a relatively early stage of the examination process and does not yet form part of the Development Plan. It can however form a material consideration. Further material considerations to be balanced against the Development Plan include the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and national Planning Practice Guidance (PPG).

South Holland Local Plan

4.3. The South Holland Local Plan was adopted in July 2006 and the majority of the policies were saved by Direction in July 2009. The saved policies relevant to this application, which are considered in this Statement, comprise the following:

- SG1 – General Sustainable Development
- SG4 – Development in the Countryside
- SG14 – Design and Layout of New Development
- SG15 – New Development: Facilities for Road Users, Pedestrians and Cyclists
- SG16 – Parking Standards in New Development
- SG17 – Protection of Residential Amenity
- SG18 – Landscaping of New Development
- SG20 – Extensions and Alterations to Existing Buildings

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

4.4. Published in March 2012 the NPPF sets out the Government's planning policies for England. The NPPF must be given significant weight in the consideration of planning decisions. In accordance with paragraph 14 of the NPPF, the planning authority should grant permission for development proposals that accord with the Development Plan without delay.

Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)

4.8. On 6 March 2014 the government launched its Planning Practice Guidance. The web-based resource brings together a series of English planning guidance documents into a new format, and assists in the interpretation and practice of national planning policies as outlined in the NPPF.

South East Lincolnshire Local Plan 2011-2036 – Publication Version (March 2017)

4.9. The Council are currently in the process of producing a replacement Local Plan to cover the period up to 2036, working in conjunction with Boston Borough Council and Lincolnshire County Council. The Publication Version of the South East Lincolnshire Local Plan was submitted to the Secretary of State for examination on 23 June 2017.

4.10. Whilst draft plans are capable of being material considerations in the determination of applications the weight to be given to their policies depends upon their stage of preparation, the extent to which there are unresolved objections and the degree of consistency with the policies of the NPPF[1]. The Secretary of State has confirmed in appeal decisions that draft plans which have yet to be subjected to independent examination are to be given little weight. The relevant policies of the draft plan are nevertheless considered in this Statement.

[1] NPPF paragraph 216

Chapter 5

Planning Judgement

5.1 Principle of Development

5.1.1 Adopted Policy SG4 'Development in the Countryside' states that planning permission will only be granted for development in the open countryside which is essential in the proposed location and cannot reasonably be accommodated within defined settlement limits. It is evident from the justification text that the primary purpose of this policy is to protect the loss of greenfield land to development.

5.1.2 As set out previously, the proposals are seeking to marginally increase the scale of an existing residential care facility. Given that the development is an expansion to an existing care home it is considered that it is entirely appropriate for the development proposals to take place in the location, subject to an appropriately designed extension.

5.1.3 Regardless of the existing use, and as expanded upon later in this Statement, the application site would nevertheless represent an appropriate location for the operation of a care home and associated extension. The proposals are not therefore considered to represent any direct conflict with Policy SG4.

5.1.4 Saved Policy SG20 relates specifically to the extension and alteration of existing buildings and states that such works will be permitted subject to a list of criteria. In the case of extensions to buildings outside of defined settlement limits the policy states that the extension ought to be subservient to the host property in terms of scale and should have no material impact on the appearance of the wider landscape. The proposed scale of the extension has been designed to ensure that it remains subordinate to the existing property, being set back from the Fen Road / east facing property elevation by 2.5 metres. The extension is also set-in from the western elevation by 2.5 metres. The ridge height of the extension reflects the existing property, whilst the roof pitch reflects the blank gable on the northern elevation. The scale of the proposed extension should also be considered in the context of the generous garden curtilage and significant setback of the property from both Fen Road and Further Old Gate.

5.1.5 In addition to the expansion of the existing home, the proposals will provide employment in a rural setting which will include existing and proposed care staff and managerial roles. The proposals should be supported in accordance with NPPF Paragraph 28 which states that local plans should *"support the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business and enterprise in rural areas, both through the conversion of existing buildings and well designed new buildings."*

5.1.6 The proposals represent the sustainable growth and expansion of an existing small-scale residential care home, building upon the applicant's long-standing reputation as a care provider in the local area.

5.1.7 It is considered that the principle of the proposed development in this locality is compliant with the Development Plan and NPPF. Indeed the Council have confirmed in pre-application discussions that the proposals are acceptable in principle.

5.2 Impacts on the character of the countryside

5.2.1 The justification text to Policy SG4 states that development proposals in the rural areas should not lead to activity on such a scale as to promote unacceptable increases in movements by motor vehicles or unacceptable impacts on the character of the countryside.

5.2.2 It is not considered that the proposals will result in an adverse impact upon the character of the countryside. In the main, the proposals are seeking to enhance an existing small-scale care home facility. It is acknowledged that the proposal will lead to an increase in activity but not to such a scale as to adversely affect the character of the locality.

5.2.3 The proposals will evidently make use of the existing property and the proposed extension will allow the proposed care home to operate effectively whilst providing enhanced facilities for both young residents and staff.

5.2.4 Saved Policy SG14 expects proposals to make a positive contribution to the architectural and visual quality of its surroundings. In assessing the design of new development, the policy states that the LPA will consider the choice of materials and architectural detailing. Policy SG18 seeks to ensure that landscaping is an integral part of the design of development including the protection of existing landscape features where possible.

5.2.5 As previously highlighted, the proposed scale, form and height of the extension has sought to respect the host dwelling, whilst remaining subordinate to the existing building. The property benefits from a large curtilage and the scale of the extension is also considered to be appropriate in this setting. The siting of the extension on the southern elevation has provided an opportunity to enhance the street facing elevation, providing a new access door with canopy feature fronting Fen Road.

5.2.6 The proposed extension has been designed using materials and architectural detailing which reflects the character and appearance of the host property. The proposed windows and doors have sought to align with the fenestration throughout the host property and the roof pitch of the extension has sought to reflect the design of the blank gable on the northern elevation.

5.2.7 The existing vehicular access point, outbuilding and hard surfaced areas for parking / manoeuvring will be maintained to accommodate staff car parking. No additional hard landscaping is proposed to facilitate the development. Whilst a single tree will need to be felled to facilitate the extension, the site will continue to benefit from extensive areas of soft landscaping including hedgerows and tree planting.

5.2.8 It is considered that the proposals would not result in a material impact on the character of the countryside. Indeed, this has been confirmed by Officers in pre-application correspondence.

5.3 Residential Amenity / Impact on Neighbouring Uses

5.3.1 Policy SG14 requires the design and layout of new development to consider the effect of the development on the amenity of nearby residents. Policy SG20 states that extensions to existing building will be permitted where the extension would not materially harm the amenity of adjacent residents by reason of overlooking, overshadowing or loss of light.

5.3.2 The property does not have any immediate residential neighbours and there is therefore no policy conflict in this regard.

5.4 Access and Parking

5.4.1 Policy SG15 requires development proposals to provide safe and convenient access to and within the site to accommodate the potential increase in movement generated by the proposals.

5.4.2 The cumulative level of vehicular activity associated with the proposed staffing levels is considered to be appropriate in the location of the application site. The proposed use will be served by the existing access point off Fen Road which is considered to represent a safe and convenient access for vehicles, pedestrians and cyclists.

5.4.3 Policy SG20 requires extensions to buildings to ensure that the operational car parking needs of the development continue to be met. Both saved Policy SG16 and emerging Policy 31 identify a requirement for care homes under Use Class C2 to make provision for 1 car parking space per 3 residents and 1 cycle space per 3 staff.

5.4.4 The application site benefits from a garage and area of hardstanding which can accommodate the level of vehicular parking associated with the proposed use. Secure cycle storage is also provided within the existing garage.

5.5 Flood Risk

5.5.1 Whilst the subject site is located within Flood Zone 3, as the proposals involve the change of use of an existing building and incorporate an extension with a footprint of less than 250sqm, it is not necessary for a Sequential Test exercise to be undertaken. Officers have also confirmed during pre-application correspondence that a site specific Flood Risk Assessment is not required. The proposed extension has been orientated to ensure an appropriate stand-off from the adjacent watercourse. The proposals do not therefore conflict with draft Policy 3 in respect of flood risk.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

6.1 The application proposal is for the erection of a two storey extension and the material change of use of The Three Chestnuts to a children's care home under Use Class C2.

6.2 The proposals have sought to build upon the success of an established small-scale care home facility by providing an additional 2no. residential spaces for young people in need of care.

6.3 The application site is an appropriate location for the setting of the proposed use, particularly in the setting of the existing use. The proposals have been carefully designed to respect the character and appearance of the host property and the countryside area.

6.4 The application proposal accords with the development plan and should be approved without delay in accordance with the NPPF.