

WELLS-NEXT-THE-SEA- PF/24/1123 – Erection of single storey side extension; alterations to fenestration; addition of 10no. dormer windows to replace rooflights; addition of solar panels; creation of pool to rear and alterations to landscaping/parking, Youth Hostel, St Nicholas Church Rooms, Church Plain, Wells-next-the-sea, Norfolk NR23 1EQ

Minor Development

Target Date: 18 July 2024

Extension of Time: 30 September 2024

Case Officer: Mark Brands

Full Planning Permission

RELEVANT CONSTRAINTS:

Within Wells-next-the-Sea settlement boundary

Within Wells-next-the-Sea Conservation Area

National Landscape - The Norfolk Coast Area Of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Areas Susceptible to Groundwater SFRA

Flood zone 3a

GIRAMS Zones of Influence (various)

THE APPLICATION:

Seeks planning permission for the operational works shown on the supporting plans. In this instance those works include the erection of a single storey side extension (to northern wing), alterations to fenestration, addition of 10 no. dormer windows to replace rooflights, addition of solar panels and creation of pool to the rear and alterations to landscaping and parking.

It is recognised from the representations received that some concerns have been raised over the use of the building. As set out the use is not under consideration as part of the application proposals, and any development would need to be compatible with the lawful use of the site as a hostel. Consideration of such works in no way infers a “de facto” change of use without this being explicitly sought, nor would the proposed works prevent the use of the site as a hostel.

The current building comprises a former youth hostel, set across 2 floors with 11 bedrooms providing accommodation for 33 guests, and communal rooms and facilities.

Regarding the internal reconfiguration, much of the internal subdivisions would be removed, and this would be reconfigured into 10 ensuite bedrooms, providing accommodation for 20 guests

The design and access statement sets out the intention of the application being considered is solely the renovation works and would not entail changes to the use under the current planning application. As such the consideration is limited solely to the external development taking place rather than the configuration and interior and use (as alterations could be done internally without planning permission). However, it should be noted that the nature of the proposed use envisaged by the applicants could be considered materially different from the current use as a youth hostel and require separate planning permission in its own right concerning change of use.

Further details / amendments received during the course of the application

Following the consultation process, amendments have been made to the plans, and further clarification provided to address some of the points raised, full update of plans and design and access addendum received 17th July 2024.

RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY:

Reference IS2/23/2742
Description Change of use from Youth Hostel (C1) to Holiday Let (C3) with extensions and internal/external alterations
Outcome Advice given 30.04.2024

Reference PF/98/1428
Description Change of use from church hall to youth hostel and installation of rooflights and roof lanterns
Outcome Approved 14.12.1998

REASONS FOR REFERRAL TO COMMITTEE:

Call in to Development Committee requested by Cllr Peter Fisher, given the local concerns over parking, overlooking, the likelihood of noise issues in a very quiet area of the town adjacent the Church, as well as the weight of objections

CONSULTATIONS:

Parish/Town Council

Wells-next-the-Sea Town Council - OBJECT

The proposed development of the Youth Hostel into a ten bedroom holiday rental, opposite the main parish church, in a quiet residential part of the town's conservation area, is totally unacceptable.

The Youth Hostel is in extremely close proximity to several residential dwellings, and a holiday rental that can sleep up to twenty people next door to these dwellings has the potential to cause significant disturbance and loss of amenity. The most significant proposed change having the potential to impact on the surrounding properties is the development of the existing rear car park of the Hostel into a garden with the installation of an outdoor plunge pool and large terrace. The Youth Hostel at Wells never had any useable outdoor facilities and the Youth Hostel Association has a 10 pm to 7 am quiet policy.

Furthermore, the proposed development of the car park results in the loss of at least four car parking spaces, reducing the number of existing car parking spaces from ten to the six proposed in the application. In addition, the proposed access changes for neighbouring properties would result in the loss of parking for these properties, forcing even more vehicles to park on to the adjacent roads.

The on-road parking in the vicinity of the Youth Hostel is at capacity with no more space for additional vehicles. The situation in Church Plain is so critical, with large modern vehicles parked on both sides of the road, that emergency vehicles and utility vehicles have on occasion not been able to get through.

The Youth Hostel building, which was previously the parish church hall, was built in 1914, and since that time there has been unrestricted access through the grounds of the Hostel for the public to walk from Church Plain through to Crown Alley and Burnt Street. The properties to the south and west of the Youth Hostel have access rights along the south side of the Hostel. The proposed gates closing off this access will significantly impact on the use and amenity of the properties effected, in particular the Women's Institute who need vehicular access and the cottage to the south that will lose access to a car parking space.

The street scene in Church Plain has not changed since 1914, and the proposed gates, fences and planters outside the Hostel will significantly impact on the street scene and the conservation area. The proposed changes to roof and elevations of the Hostel, including the dormer windows, solar panels and additional windows alter the overall appearance of the building and is not in character with the historic nature of the building and its surroundings.

The Women's Institute Hall to the west of the Hostel has served the ladies and community of Wells since at least 1923. The imposition of this development on these ladies and the potential loss of unrestricted access is catastrophic. Many of the members have restricted mobility and need vehicle access to the door of the Hall.

The idea that they will have to negotiate massive metal gates is disgusting. The proposed plans also show that the developer proposes planting trees right up against the wall of the Woman's Institute building which will cause loss of light and overshadowing, there will also be a risk to the structural integrity of the building.

If this building is to become a dwelling, for rent or not, the number of bedrooms need to be reduced. The provision of parking needs to reflect the number of bedrooms and probable number of occupants. The access rights of the neighbouring properties need to be respected and everything must be done to counter the potential noise and nuisance that the plunge pool and outdoor terrace will undoubtedly cause for neighbours. The design of the development needs to better respect the history and character of the building, the conservation area and the nearby listed buildings.

Conservation and Design (NNDC) – No objection to revised proposal subject to imposition of conditions.

Norfolk County Council Highways – No objections to revised proposal subject to imposition of conditions.

REPRESENTATIONS:

60 representations have been received, **objecting** to the proposals. A summary of the main points is set out below (full comments available on the public website):

- Inaccurate details
- Concerns over consultation

- Inclusion of security gate, restricting access and rights of access for other properties the access serves, preventing unfettered access, and other vehicles / emergency vehicles from using lane and restricting access for people with mobility issues being dropped off to the WI
- Contravention of legal agreements
- Width of the access at 7ft too narrow for vehicles to be able to use / would not be able to get out of vehicles, and no passing place/ turning point, health and safety concern particularly for users of the WI
- Obstruction of prescriptive right of way considered to run through the site
- Gate location infringes on neighbouring property
- Gate would also appear out of keeping with the surroundings
- Narrowing of lane would interfere with vehicles being able to use access and restricting manoeuvrability and use of parking areas for neighbouring properties and WI
- Concerns over use of site as a party house in close proximity to neighbouring amenities and within Conservation Area would be detrimental to local vicinity, also inappropriate opposite a church
- Insufficient parking and loss of parking, resulting in increased pressure for on street parking
- Increased noise concerns from the site being used as a party house / change of use detrimental to neighbouring properties including the WI, including additional noise from the outside space and absence of noise restrictions enforced by YHA between 10pm and 7am under previous owners / use
- Reduced lighting concerns to the WI, through the landscape tree planting and fence
- Design, massing and bulk not in keeping with surroundings and detrimental to Conservation Area
- Detrimental to surroundings and Conservation Area, through the design changes, and addition of dormers and pv panels
- Detriment and loss of amenity through overlooking
- Impact on the WI able to operate through restrictions on access / maintenance concerns
- Flooding concerns
- Additional lighting impacts to neighbouring properties
- Concerns over lack of consultation on change of use relating to IS2/23/2742
- Development out of keeping with residential area, and clash with architectural styles in vicinity
- Contrary to policies in Wells NP – including parking provision, and loss of amenity

HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS:

Art. 8: The right to respect for private and family life.

Art. 1 of the First Protocol: The right to peaceful enjoyment of possessions

Having considered the above matters, APPROVAL of this application as recommended is considered to be justified, proportionate and in accordance with planning law.

CRIME AND DISORDER ACT 1998 - SECTION 17

The application raises no significant crime and disorder issues.

LOCAL FINANCE CONSIDERATIONS

Under Section 70(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 the council is required when determining planning applications to have regard to any local finance considerations, so far

as material to the application. Local finance considerations are not considered to be material to this case.

RELEVANT POLICIES:

North Norfolk Core Strategy (September 2008)

Policy SS 1 - Spatial Strategy for North Norfolk
Policy SS 14 - Wells-Next-the-Sea
Policy EN 1 - Norfolk Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the Broads
Policy EN 2 - Protection and enhancement of Landscape and Settlement Character
Policy EN 4 - Design
Policy EN 6 - Sustainable Construction and Energy Efficiency
Policy EN 7 - Renewable Energy
Policy EN 8 - Protecting and Enhancing the Historic Environment
Policy EN 9 - Biodiversity and Geology
Policy EN 10 - Development and Flood Risk
Policy EN 13 - Pollution and Hazard Prevention and Minimisation
Policy EC 8 - Retaining and Adequate Supply and Mix of Tourist Accommodation
Policy CT 5 - The Transport Impact of the New Development
Policy CT 6 - Parking Provision

Wells-next-the-sea Neighbourhood Plan 2023-2036 (2024)

Policy WNS6: High quality design
Policy WNS11: Protecting the historic environment

Material Considerations

National Planning Policy Framework (2023):

Chapter 2 - Achieving sustainable development
Chapter 4 - Decision-making
Chapter 5 - Delivering a sufficient supply of homes
Chapter 6 - Building a strong, competitive economy
Chapter 9 - Promoting sustainable transport
Chapter 12 - Achieving well-designed and beautiful places
Chapter 14 - Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change
Chapter 15 - Conserving and enhancing the natural environment
Chapter 16 - Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

Supplementary Planning Documents and Guidance

North Norfolk Design Guide (2008)
Norfolk Green Infrastructure and Recreational Impact Avoidance and Mitigation Strategy – Habitats Regulations Assessment Strategy Document (2021)
North Norfolk Landscape Character Assessment (2021)

OFFICER ASSESSMENT:

Main Issues:

- 1) Principle of development**
- 2) Design and conservation considerations**
- 3) Amenity**
- 4) Highways**

- 5) Energy Efficiency**
- 6) Flood risk**
- 7) Planning balance and conclusion**

1. Principle of development

Policy SS 1 sets out that most of the new development in North Norfolk will take place in the towns and larger villages as defined as Principal and Secondary Settlements and a small amount of new development will be focused on several designated Service and Coastal Service Villages. The site is within the Wells-Next-the-Sea settlement boundary, designated as a Secondary Settlement, where a more limited amount of additional development will be accommodated (approximately 25% of employment land allocations and 20% of new homes).

The proposals seek to make alterations and to extend an existing hostel (there would be no loss of tourist accommodation, complying with EC 8) and the principle of development is therefore supported subject to compliance with other relevant policies within the Development Plan (including the Wells Neighbourhood Plan) and having regard to any other relevant material considerations including those within the NPPF.

2. Design and Conservation considerations

Core Strategy Policy EN 2 seeks, amongst other matters, to ensure that development be informed by, and be sympathetic to, the distinctive character areas identified in the North Norfolk Landscape Character Assessment. Proposals should demonstrate that their location, scale, design and materials will protect, conserve and, where possible, enhance the special qualities and local distinctiveness of the area, distinctive settlement character and the setting of, and views from, Conservation Areas.

Core Strategy Policy EN 4 requires that all development should be designed to a high quality, reinforcing local distinctiveness, be expected to be suitably designed for the context within which they are set, and ensure that the scale and massing of buildings relate sympathetically to the surrounding area. New non-residential developments should provide, where applicable, innovative design which is locally distinctive.

Paragraph 135 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out that developments should provide the following: function well and add to the overall quality of the area; are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping; are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting; establish or maintain a strong sense of place; optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development; and create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being.

Policy WNS6 of the Wells Neighbourhood Plan requires new development to be of high quality design, having regard to the Design Guide and Codes within the neighbourhood plan. Of particular relevance to the proposal is a requirement for the scale and form of new development to have regard of their impact at street level and their appearances from more distant views and should be in keeping with the form and massing of neighbouring properties. Regarding extensions, these should be designed in a sensitive way in relation to the size and location of the host building and avoid overlooking, overshadowing, or an overdevelopment of the plot, and incorporate sufficient car parking space within the curtilage of the site and be

configured so that they would not have an unacceptable impact on the living conditions or amenity of the occupants of neighbouring properties.

Policy EN 8 of the Core Strategy states that development proposals should preserve or enhance the character and appearance of designated assets, historic buildings/structures, monuments, landscapes and their settings through high quality, sensitive design. This policy also seeks to ensure that the character and appearance of Conservation Areas is preserved, and where possible enhanced, encouraging the highest quality building design, townscape creation and landscaping in keeping with these defined areas.

The site is situated within the Wells-next-the-sea Conservation Area, which for the purposes of the NPPF is considered a designated heritage asset. The site is surrounded by a number of listed buildings, including the Grade II* St Nicholas Church opposite and several Grade II cottages either side.

When considering proposals or works affecting listed buildings, Section 66(1) of the of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 states:

'In considering whether to grant planning permission or permission in principle for development which affects a listed building or its setting, the local planning authority....shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses'.

This obligation, found in Sections 16 and 66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, applies to all decisions concerning listed buildings. Preservation in this context means not harming the interest in the building, as opposed to keeping it utterly unchanged.

In drafting the legislation, Parliament's intention was that *'decision makers should give "considerable importance and weight" to the desirability of preserving the setting of listed buildings' when carrying out the balancing exercise'.*

When considering development proposals located within a Conservation Area, Section 72 of the of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 states:

'In the exercise, with respect to any buildings or other land in a conservation area,.....special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area'.

The application building was constructed in the early C20. The first is understood to have been as Church Rooms ancillary to the Church of St Nicholas. Subsequent adaptation to a Youth Hostel has required a number of contemporary alterations such as internal subdivision. Whilst the building itself is not a designated heritage asset, the façade makes a positive contribution to the conservation area, it has an unusual style for this part of Wells, the combination of the crow-stepped gables and decorative finials with traditional windows and red brick create a locally distinctive building.

At pre-application stage, officers raised concerns about the alterations proposed to the fenestration on the primary elevation, which saw two ground floor windows being enlarged with no clear justification. This element of the proposed works has since been removed, with only the front door being replaced and the existing windows retained and repaired. This will go some way to ensuring the changes to the streetscape are limited and allow the building to retain its symmetrical balance.

Following further amendments to the parking provision at the front of the building, there would now be less opportunity to introduce landscaping, however, there remains some landscaping around the entrance which would still be an improvement on the existing and should help soften the visual impact of the vehicle hard-standing.

Negotiations have produced changes to the proposed dormers and ground floor windows along both sides of the building, which have been narrowed and slightly elongated, with amended detailing to the top of the dormers. The changes to the side fenestrations are a departure from the existing, and which with the alterations to the boundary treatments may now be slightly more visible from the road. However, officers remain of the view that, despite the changes, the position of the building is set back from the road and that consequently the dominance of the front wings ensures that both the dormers and the larger windows are unlikely to become overbearing features in the streetscape. As such, their impact on the conservation area will be limited largely to a few glimpsed views when passing the site. The dormers are likely to be more prominent from various parts of the churchyard opposite, and potentially from the entrance to the church itself during the winter months when the trees along the boundary are not in full leaf. Officers consider that following the alterations to the detailing on the top of the dormers, that the features will now sit more comfortably against the character of the existing building and are unlikely to result in harm to the setting of the listed building

The only aspect of the proposed scheme that raises a slight concern for officers relates to the proposed low-level fence that is to run alongside the building separating it from the access track. With the removal of the gate across the track, the proposed fence will be visible from the conservation area and has the potential to appear awkward. In the event of an approval, officers will require the precise nature of the fencing to be agreed via condition.

Overall, the proposed works do not raise any overriding conservation concerns. The front façade will continue to make a positive contribution to the character of the streetscene and Conservation Area, as the works to this elevation are limited, and this principal elevation will largely remain as existing, with limited views of the dormers to the sides.

The pedestrian gate has now been omitted from the proposals. The side and rear of the site is currently a gravelled area. The proposals including a fence delineating and separating the land around the building from the access and providing enhanced landscaping to the rear and side of the site. Officers consider that the visual appearance of the building and the works including the alterations to the fenestration and the addition of the dormers are acceptable. The character of the building and its contribution to the streetscene and Conservation Area would be preserved.

Regarding other external changes to the building, the proposed single storey extension is limited to the northern side wing, which would be modestly extended to the rear by some 1.9m, to match the southern side wing. The fenestration alterations include changes to the side elevations with larger, more contemporary openings on the ground floor which align with first floor dormers. The openings are evenly spaced giving a symmetrical arrangement. The use of dormers will make the first floor fenestration more prominent, but is an acceptable design, as they will sit on the lower part of the roof and are not located on a principal elevation in the Conservation Area. The design is considered to accord with policies Neighbourhood Plan Policy WNS6 and Core Strategy Policies EN 4 and EN 8.

3. Amenity

Policy EN 4 of the North Norfolk Core Strategy states that proposals should not have a significantly detrimental effect on the residential amenity or nearby occupiers, additionally, Policy EN 13 seeks to minimise amongst other areas noise pollution.

In respect of proposed extensions, Policy WNS6 of the Wells Neighbourhood Plan sets out that proposal should “be designed in a sensitive way in relation to the size and location of the host building and avoid overlooking, overshadowing, or an overdevelopment of the plot [and]... be configured so that they would not have an unacceptable impact on the living conditions or amenity of the occupants of neighbouring properties”.

Paragraph 135 of the NPPF states that developments should create places with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users.

Paragraph 3.3.10 of the North Norfolk Design Guide states that residents should have the right to adequate privacy levels and that new development should not lead to any overbearing impacts upon existing dwellings.

The current rooflight configurations on the roof do not raise any amenity concerns as these are high level so prevents direct overlooking of neighbouring properties. The replacement of these and addition of the dormers (at a lower level) would change this relationship with the neighbouring properties and raises concerns over potential detriment to neighbouring amenity. This may be exacerbated by the close proximity to neighbouring properties to the sides of the building with the distance from the northern boundary around 4.6m – 6m, and around 5.6m – 8.5m from the southern neighbouring properties boundaries. The 10 dormers would include obscured glass and fixed lower section of sash windows from 1.7m, mitigating direct overlooking concerns to these neighbouring properties.

The proposals include changes to the rear of the property which would change from car parking space for approximately 5+ cars to become rear outdoor amenity space including the addition of a pool and additional landscaping. Concerns have been raised around additional noise including from the improved outdoor space to the rear. There would likely be potential for additional gatherings in this space as it changes from the existing utilitarian parking area.

In assessing the potential impact on amenity, Officers have had to consider the existing lawful use of the site as a Youth Hostel (Use Class - Sui Generis). The application is not seeking to change the use of the building and therefore would be expected to continue as a Youth Hostel following the implementation of the proposed works.

Officers recognise that the site at present does not have any planning controls restricting the use of or preventing socialising in the rear space by users of the building. Representations from Wells Town Council have indicated that the Youth Hostel at Wells never had any useable outdoor facilities and the Youth Hostel Association had a 10 pm to 7 am quiet policy. Therefore, Officers consider it was the positive management of the site that helped reduce adverse impacts on neighbouring amenity and impacts could be greater dependent on the management regime in place in the future.

In considering the rear amenity space, outdoor seating is something that you would expect to see at a Youth Hostel whereas a plunge pool would not be a usual feature to see at a Youth Hostel and this could potentially exacerbate noise through use. Nonetheless, if the times of

use of the rear amenity areas were controlled, this could help reduce adverse impacts to an acceptable level. The applicant's management plan addendum suggests continuing insistence on quiet hours (that was implemented with the previous owner of the site). Ordinarily, Officers would advise against imposing restrictive conditions to existing properties where such restrictions do not exist. However, in the case, on the basis that the rear amenity changes including the proposed pool and changes to the parking area form part of the proposed development, a restrictive condition would seem proportionate and would go some way to address the concerns raised by neighbouring properties. Officers consider that a restriction (similar to that operated by the Youth Hostel) effectively preventing use of the area between 10pm and 7am each day would likely reduce the potential for adverse impacts.

Concerns were raised over the amenity of the Women's Institute (WI) building to the rear, regarding loss of lighting. The tree planting has subsequently been omitted in favour of gravelled areas with low level shrubs. There is an existing intervisibility from the WI building to the back of the site. On balance, while the addition of dormers may be more overbearing compared with high level rooflights, the proposed mitigation measures (including obscured glazing and fixed non opening up to 1.7m) effectively reduce overlooking impacts.

On balance, subject to the imposition of conditions, the proposal is considered to be in general accordance with the requirements of Policy WNS6 of the Wells Neighbourhood Plan and Policies EN 4 and EN 13 of the Core Strategy in relation to amenity.

4. Highways

Policy CT 5 requires development to provide safe and convenient access for all modes of transport, including access to the highway network. Policy CT 6 requires new development to have sufficient parking facilities. Paragraph 115 of the NPPF states that development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe.

The highway authority requested revised plans, considering there to be a change of use of the site, and setting out the expected parking requirements. As noted, the proposals do not include a request for change of use. Revised plans have been received indicating additional parking being provided to the front. from the original proposals showing 6 instead of 8 parking spaces. It is noted the accessibility of parking space 1 behind parking spaces 2 and 3 may limit accessibility of these spaces. Additionally, it is recognised that the spaces shown on the plan fall short of the minimum car parking space standards of 2.5m by 5m. The width of the spaces shown are around 2.4m, the depth of the spaces range from 4.3 to 4.8m. Given the proximity of the building and limited size of the spaces, this would result in larger vehicles overhanging the spaces over the pavement. It should also be noted that the parking requirements for hostels are lesser than that of other forms of accommodation such as hotels, with parking requirements based on staff levels rather than number of rooms.

As part of the original permission under PF/98/1428, a condition was included for the parking to be provided prior to implementation of the hostel use, and thereafter retained permanently, with no impediment to their use. This arrangement included the hardstanding brick areas to the front and the rest of the parking at the rear. Since the permission, the parking arrangement at the front has been used differently from the approved plans, which showed 2 parking spaces each side of the entrance, parallel with the building, whereas most of the front has since been utilised as parking for the site. There is a dropped kerb across the whole site frontage, with on

street waiting restrictions. There are no obstructions to using the full frontage for parking purposes.

There are no conditions restricting occupation of the site specifically by the YHA or younger occupants, as such the site can be occupied as a hostel by all ages, rather than restricted to an age group. The loss of the parking to the rear is noted. Overall, there would be a reduction in parking from the existing provision on the site. However, given the parking available on the front of the site, and continuance of use then this is not considered to result in harm to highway safety compared with the existing parking arrangement in place at the site. Furthermore, Officers note the supporting details suggest a reduction in occupation levels and note that the parking standards for hostel accommodation is lower than other forms of tourist accommodation. The provision of cycle stands would also encourage sustainable transport options to and from the site.

The pedestrian gates have been omitted from the proposals, ensuring the access would remain unobstructed given the concerns raised by these additions

The concerns raised regarding the potential highways impact the WI to the rear are noted, regarding the reduction of the lane, and loss of space to the rear of the hostel site that could otherwise have been used for turning / manoeuvrability to aid drop off visitors. As this is private land, covered by deeds then the concerns lay predominantly as civil matters between landowners. In any event, the applicant's addendum suggests the nearest parking space could be made available to the WI to assist with mobility concerns, and the access to the WI, to the rear of the site has been increased from 7ft wide (as required under the deeds) to 9.5 ft (3m). It should be noted the planning permissions on this site only required parking and an area to the rear of the site to be available to the hostel, those conditions do not extend to use by the WI, and that this is a civil matter for landowners to resolve.

On balance, the proposal would accord with Core Strategy Policy CT 6.

5. Energy Efficiency

Core Strategy Policy EN 6 requires all new development to demonstrate how it minimises resource and energy consumption by and encouraged to incorporate on site renewable energy sources. On developments of 10 dwellings or more (including conversions) there will be a requirement on site renewable energy technology to provide for at least 10% of predicted total energy usage,

Core Strategy Policy EN 7 sets out that renewable energy proposals will be supported and considered in the context of sustainable development and climate change, taking into account the wide environmental, social and economic benefits of renewable energy gain and their contribution to overcoming energy supply problems in parts of the district. Proposals for renewable energy technology, associated infrastructure and integration of renewable technology on existing or proposed structures will be permitted where individually, or cumulatively, there are no significant adverse impacts on the surrounding landscape, townscape and historical features / areas; Residential amenity; Specific highway safety, designated nature conservation or biodiversity considerations

In terms of improving the sustainability of the site the proposal includes a range of measures to reduce its environmental impact including the installation of photovoltaics panels on the

southern roofslope (sensitively designed to sit discretely on the roofslope, so would not affect the Conservation Area), installation of an air source heat pump and improved insulation. Such improvements would improve the energy efficiency of the site and reduce its environmental impacts, positively reflecting the aspirations of local policy considerations and part 14 of the NPPF.

Officers consider the proposal would accord with the aims of Core Strategy Policies EN 4 and EN 7.

6. Flood Risk

Core Strategy Policy EN 10 sets out that only changes of use where this would result in an equal or lower risk category in the flood risk vulnerability classification and where there is no operational development involved in the change of use would be permitted. The policy sets out that most new development should be directed towards areas at lower risk of flooding in flood zone 1.

Paragraph 165 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out that inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding should be avoided by directing development away from areas at highest risk (whether existing or future). Where development is necessary in such areas, the development should be made safe for its lifetime without increasing flood risk elsewhere.

The NPPF does exclude some minor development and changes of use being subject to the sequential or exception tests (paragraph 174) but should still meet the requirements for site specific flood risk assessments. The proposal would require the application of a sequential test to be applied. Paragraph 168 sets out that the aim of the sequential test is to steer new development to areas with the lowest risk of flooding from any source. Development should not be allocated or permitted if there are reasonably available sites appropriate for the proposed development in areas with a lower risk of flooding. The sequential approach should be used in areas known to be at risk now or in the future from any form of flooding.

The proposal would result in building operations. The site falls within Flood Zone 3 a, meaning this is in an area at 'high' probability of flooding.

The application is accompanied by a site-specific flood risk assessment. The proposals include a small extension on the northern wing would be set as the main building at 4.80 Above Ordnance Datum (AOD), and proposals include a plunge pool to the rear. The site would fall under a more-vulnerable use, but as the operational works would be minor development, the Sequential Test would not apply. In any event the operational works would not significantly increase the threat of flooding elsewhere. The conclusions of the report set out the risk from overtopping of the coastal defences is low for this site, a warning and evacuation strategy has been developed within this strategy, with safe refuge available across the first floor during breach events.

Officers consider that the proposals are considered to comply with Core Strategy Policy EN 10 and provisions within the NPPF.

7. Planning Balance and Conclusion

The application seeks planning permission for operational works. No change of use is proposed as part of the application submission and the proposal been assessed on this basis.

Officers consider that the development would not result in harm to the Wells Conservation Area or setting of listing buildings. The front elevation is maintained, and the works to the side and rear elevations are not considered to be prominent or unduly detrimental to the Wells Conservation Area. As such, from a design and conservation perspective, the proposals are considered acceptable.

It is accepted there would be a reduction of parking provision and the parking spaces to the front would be short of the required parking space dimensions usually required. However, taking into account the existing use and existing parking arrangement on the site, where this utilises the whole site frontage and issues including overhanging vehicles would have been a pre-existing issue, there are no formal objections on highway safety grounds from the Highway Authority, and on balance given the absence of such an objection, existing parking arrangement and no intensification or change of use proposed, wouldn't be grounds to resist the loss of the rear part of the site for parking purposes.

The highways authority has raised no objections to changes to the parking arrangement on the site.

In respect of amenity, the lower part of the dormer windows will have obscure glazing and be non-opening. This will effectively mitigate potential overlooking impacts on neighbouring amenity.

Alterations to the rear, including the plunge pool and amenity area should not give rise to unacceptable subject to usage restrictions.

Officers consider that accessibility for vehicles for properties who have a right over the current access would be a civil matter and note that the applicant is taking steps to improve those arrangements.

On balance, subject to the imposition of conditions, the proposals are considered to be in general accordance with Development Plan policy considerations (including the requirements within the Wells Neighbourhood Plan and provisions within the NPPF as set out above.

RECOMMENDATION:

APPROVAL subject to conditions relating to the following matters:

- Time Limit for implementation
- In accordance with approved plans
- Car and cycle parking areas to be laid out
- Securing details of cycle parking provision
- Landscaping and low-level fence details
- Use of rear garden (excludes 10pm to 7am on each day)
- Obscure glazing
- Materials and joinery details

Final wording of conditions and any others considered necessary to be delegated to the Assistant Director – Planning