

Recommendation from Masterplan Working Group for consideration at Town Development & Planning Committee on 14th November 2018

Draft Comments from Calne Town Council in relation to application 18/09556/FUL – rear of 8-13 High Street, Calne submitted by Churchill Retirement Living

Application 18/09556/FUL is for 39 Apartments for older people, Guest Apartment, Communal Facilities, Access, Car Parking, Landscaping and 4 Retail Units.

Calne Town Council strongly OBJECTS and ask that Wiltshire Council REFUSE Application 18/09556/FUL on the following grounds:

1: The proposal, by reason of its spatial layout and the configuration of private sheltered housing with frontage retail development, will fail to integrate with the existing town centre along the north and south boundaries of the site, and does not make the most of the opportunity to enhance the public realm, improve connectivity, or support an active community. The limited benefits of the proposal do not outweigh the lost opportunity to regenerate the town centre in an appropriate manner that would arise from the implementation of this proposal. Application 18/09556/FUL is therefore in conflict with the Wiltshire Core Strategy, specifically the Calne Area Strategy 5.41 bullet point 5, Core Policy 8, and Policies WS2.1 and WS2.2 of the Calne Community Neighbourhood Plan February 2018.

2: The proposal, by reason of its height and substantial mass, will dominate the town centre, will obstruct existing north-south views and vistas through the site, and will fail to enhance the public realm or improve connectivity in the town centre. The Vision and Scoping study conducted as a forerunner to the creation of the Calne Community Neighbourhood Plan identified Calne as a market town set in a valley with characteristic views of the surrounding ridge lines from the town centre. The mass of this proposal would clearly be detrimental to that character rather than enhancing local distinctiveness. The proposal is therefore in conflict with Policy CP57 (particularly i, iii, iv and vi) of the Wiltshire Core Strategy and Policy BE1 of the Calne Community Neighbourhood Plan.

Additional information to support the reasons for refusal:

Wiltshire Core Strategy (2015)

The Wiltshire Core Strategy identifies in respect of Calne that ‘...further regeneration opportunities remain’ (Para.5.39); and the Strategy for Calne requires that ‘...housing growth is carefully balanced with job creation and town centre improvement’ (Para 5.39).

The Wiltshire Core Strategy supporting text to Policy CP8 entitled the Strategy for Calne identifies that a forthcoming Neighbourhood Plan will ‘...strengthen and regenerate the town centre and build on the success of recent regeneration projects’ (1st bullet, Para 5.41). The Calne Community Area Neighbourhood Plan is now complete and was Made in February 2018.

Policy CP8 states: “Development proposals in the Calne Community Area will need to demonstrate how the relevant issues and considerations listed in Paragraph 5.41 will be addressed”.

It is notable that the application submission has failed to justify the proposals in accordance with Policy CP8, and specifically the 1st bullet of Para 5.41. In fact, the application is largely silent on the local community’s aspiration to regenerate the town centre.

Wiltshire Council’s Housing Land Supply Statement, dated March 2017 confirms that Calne has exceeded its indicative housing requirement; therefore, there is no strategic need for further housing in Calne during the current Plan period.

Calne Community Neighbourhood Plan (2018)

Paragraph 26 of the Calne Community Neighbourhood Plan states that the Masterplan has been incorporated into the Neighbourhood Plan and policy WS2.2 requires development proposals in the Masterplan area, or adjacent to it, to show how they meet its’ objectives.

The application site lies within the Calne Town Centre Masterplan Boundary (map P.52 of the Neighbourhood Plan). The Masterplan is embedded within the made Calne Community Neighbourhood Plan and forms part of the Wiltshire development plan. This gives significant weight to the Masterplan in the decision-making process regarding any applications received.

Paragraph 125 of the Calne Community Neighbourhood Plan sets out a vision for the town centre drawn from an earlier iteration of the Masterplan (April 2014), and Policy WS2.2 expressly states that proposals in the Town Centre must, “...*demonstrate how they contribute to the masterplan objective and dovetail with the ambitions for the Town Centre as a whole. In particular, proposals that have the potential to benefit vehicular, pedestrian and cycle movement within the Town Centre, helping to tackle issues identified within the masterplan, should consider and address opportunities as part of their scheme*”. Application 18/09556/FUL fails to demonstrate how it is compliant with Policy WS2.2 – there is no justification of compliance set out in the Planning Statement.

The application proposal is in conflict the Calne Community Neighbourhood Plan Policy WS2.2 on grounds that proposal is not demonstrably meet the criteria listed in Paragraph 125 of the Calne Community Neighbourhood Plan, and cannot be regarded as a ‘regeneration scheme’. It is instead a residential infill scheme with limited non residential space, which even if let, would fail to achieve the objectives of the masterplan vision because of the spatial layout of the scheme, which fails to capitalise on the existing publicly accessible land to the north.

It is clear from the Calne Community Neighbourhood Plan that residents do not have to accept further housing development, as the indicative housing requirements for the plan period have already been met. However, there is provision in the Neighbourhood Plan for the community to accept further housing if it brings

adequate community benefit. Calne Town Council does not believe that there is any community benefit contained within this scheme and therefore chooses not to support it.

Application 18/09556/FUL states that there is a need for sheltered housing in Calne; however, no evidence is provided in support of this statement. Furthermore, such sheltered housing could potentially be met on alternative sites, or a lower quantum of sheltered housing could have been incorporated into a more imaginative, mixed-use scheme. There is an undisputed need for care home facilities near Calne; indeed a recent development of approximately 300 houses to the south-east of the town was approved with Calne Town Council support because it incorporated a 75 bed care home. Unfortunately, the care home was not built as it would not be 'financially viable', only the houses! However, this proposal is not intended as a care home; indeed, the site would be entirely inappropriate for such a facility. Instead, this proposal is intended for older people who are fully mobile and able to live independently.

Design considerations

The application proposal is 3-4 storeys. The architects have sought to break up the mass through use of render and brick, slate and clay tiles, variable ridge heights, and the use of dormer windows. Notwithstanding, this building is of considerable mass, and will dominate the public realm around this part of the town centre and from medium term range views across the town centre. The architectural style is mundane and uninspiring, is unlikely to be of enduring quality unless the detailing is strictly controlled.

The proposal is of a higher residential density than that previously refused under application number 15/12561/FUL on 4th May 2016.

The proposal is defensive as it includes private space for the sole use of residents. The small north and west facing private gardens will be mainly in shadow, and will receive very little direct sunlight, even in summer. The only public realm contribution is the small amount of proposed tree planting and the surfaced area in front of the proposed retail units. There is no permeability through the site, and the only interactive element of the scheme will be along The Pippin frontage.

Heritage considerations

The proposal is in close proximity the grade II listed Zion Chapel, and also lies within the Calne Conservation Area. The Town Council is concerned that the height and mass of the proposal would excessively dominate the town centre and request that the views of the Conservation Officer are taken into account.

Transport considerations

The parking provision of 17 spaces is at 0.38 spaces/unit, and as such fall below Wiltshire Council's parking standards. The Transport Statement has applied an accessibility discount and also states that alternative parking facilities are available in public car parks. However, the adjacent car parks are under the control of

Sainsbury's Supermarket and are time limited (2 hours); there is no provision for longer stay either by direct payment or by season ticket. It is probable that new residents, who are likely to be fully mobile, may choose to own a car to travel further afield than the town centre, but they will have nowhere to park it.

Surrounding use considerations

Public events, such as the summer carnival, winter festival, and Bike Meet, use the car park to the south of the application site. There is a genuine concern that future residents of the sheltered housing may make noise related complaints which may fetter the long-standing public use of this car park for public events.

Community considerations

Residents voted to accept the Calne Community Neighbourhood Plan in February 2018 after extensive consultation. The Neighbourhood Plan makes clear that residents of Calne do not have to accept further housing development, as the indicative housing requirements for the plan period have already been met, and that further housing will only be supported if people believe that it brings adequate community benefit. This application does not.

In order to try to cooperate with the applicant, it was suggested that some community benefit could be incorporated within the design. Firstly, it was proposed that an adjacent electricity sub-station could be incorporated within their development in order to enhance the public open space on the north side; secondly, it was suggested that a public convenience could be incorporated within the proposal to make up for the facility in the town centre that was closed by Wiltshire Council approximately 2 years ago. The convenience would be maintained by Calne Town Council. Both of these suggestions were rejected by the applicant's agent out of hand.

A survey hosted by Calne Our Place has recently been completed by 477* local residents and businesses. When asked if they supported the proposal by Churchill Retirement Living for the town centre site 87% said they did not. Many of those who expressed support for the proposal stated that they felt that anything was better than the open wasteland that currently exists, rather than expressing the view that the current proposal was appropriate or would enhance the town centre.

A summary of the community feedback will be included with this letter.

Alternative proposal for the site

In our view, this is a missed opportunity. The Baptist Church proposal, shows how an alternative scheme, with a more diverse range of uses including a lot of community space, could be successfully integrated with the existing Town Centre, and create a greater public realm contribution without being overbearing or dominant.