

Purpose of the briefing and background

The purpose of this briefing note is to advise Members of a forthcoming full application which proposes the redevelopment of Hanover Court and Princess Court.

Proposed development

The proposal seeks permission for the demolition of the existing 127 homes on site (which fall below current nationally described space standards, have very low thermal efficiency, fire safety issues, are in poor condition with structural issues). The proposal seeks to replace the existing buildings with new residential accommodation totalling 165 homes (72 affordable- 44% and 93 private homes- 56%). The proposals include the creation of a new community room located on the ground floor of one of the apartment blocks, this facility is intended to replace the existing community room currently located on-site.

Site Constraints

The site as existing consists of Hanover and Princess Courts which are located just off Hills Road, within a mile of the city centre, and comprise two apartment blocks constructed in 1968. There is also an interconnected block of garages and the three buildings partially enclose a courtyard and community room.

As existing there are 127 properties on site, 82 of these properties are council rented homes within both Hanover Court and Princess Court.

The site lies inside the New Town and Glisson Road Conservation Area, and the appraisal for the conservation area states that the existing buildings make a negative contribution to the area. There are no listed buildings within the site itself, although there are a number in close proximity. Wanstead House is a Grade II* Listed Building and is located approximately 70m to the north east of the site. The Church of Our Lady of the Assumption and the English Martyrs, Cambridge is located approximately 100m to the north east of the site.

The site sits within a Controlled Parking Zone (CPZ).

There are a number of mature trees within the centre of the site and along the sites boundaries. on and around the site. The trees include 6 category A trees: (3 London Plane trees, 3 Chinese Scholar trees, 8 category B trees along the western boundary, 7 category B trees along the eastern boundary and 4 category B trees within the centre of the site.

Policy considerations

A residential development on this site does not change the existing use of the site and the principle is therefore acceptable.

Policy 3 of the Cambridge Local Plan 2018 relates to new residential development in the city and is of relevance in determining the acceptability of the principle of this development proposal.

Policy 3 seeks to ensure that new residential development is appropriately located, and this includes with respect to surrounding uses, accessibility, and access to facilities. The application site is in a location which has other residential uses in close proximity, has good transport accessibility and is on land which already has a residential use.

Policy 73 stipulates that the loss of community facilities will be permitted if the loss can be replaced within the new development or relocated to at least its existing scale, range, quality

and accessibility for its users. The existing community room is located centrally within the site and it measures 60 sqm in area. The proposal indicates a community room with a floor area of 70sqm could be provided within the ground floor of block D. Therefore, as proposed the new community room would exceed the size of the existing facility and would meet the policy requirements.

Paragraph 124 of the NPPF further advises that planning decisions should promote an effective use of land in meeting the need for homes and other uses, while safeguarding and improving the environment and ensuring safe and healthy living conditions.

The proposed development would deliver a meaningful increase in the number of high quality homes within the City, helping to address local housing needs and contribute towards meeting housing requirements across Cambridge through the provision of 165 new homes.

With the above in mind, subject to other material planning considerations it is considered that the proposal is in accordance with policy 3 and policy 73 of the Cambridge Local Plan 2018 and the NPPF.

Affordable Housing provision

Policy 45 of the Cambridge Local Plan requires for a scheme of this size 40% of dwellings to be affordable. The proposed development includes 72 affordable homes which exceeds the policy 45 requirement by delivering 44% of the development as affordable.

Policy 45 and the Housing SPD requires that developments should include a balanced mix of dwelling sizes, types and tenures to meet projected future household needs within Cambridge.

In terms of the affordable housing tenure proposed, the applicants have not provided any details in respect of the proposed split between social rent, 60% and 80% of affordable rent. This information must be included in the housing statement which will accompany the planning application, the applicants must demonstrate that the proposals comply with the Greater Cambridge Housing Strategy 2024-2029.

Trees

The site comprises a total of 31 trees. 6 x category A trees, 19 x category B trees, 5 x category C trees, 1 x category U tree.

The trees are subject to statutory protection due to the sites location within the Conservation Area.

The proposals involve the removal of the 3 x Category A trees (high value) along the northern boundary of the site. However, the scheme seeks to retain the majority of the other trees across the development. The applicants have submitted technical information in the form of a demolition (health and safety) risk assessment, tree survey data and tree risk assessment.

The proposed removal of the 3 x Category A (G005) trees will significantly reduce the canopy cover on the site. These trees are prominent when viewed from surrounding streets and are distinct, mature and attractive features that can be seen from considerable distances. The trees thus make an important and positive contribution to the landscape of the locality and to the character and appearance of the area. The other tall trees along the boundaries of the site and any new tree planting that comes forward in time would blend into the surroundings but will not provide the same level of screening of the taller buildings on the site or contribution to the character of the area for a significant period of time. Moreover, the other benefits of the three existing trees involve their environmental contributions (reduce the urban heat island,

provide shade, sequester carbon, improve air quality, enhance biodiversity etc.). The trees also provide social benefits such as a sense of place, physical and mental wellbeing.

Other key policies and material considerations

Urban Design and Conservation

Policies 55, 56, 57, 58 and 59 of the Local Plan seek to ensure that development responds appropriately to its context, is of a high quality, reflects or successfully contrasts with existing building forms and materials and includes appropriate landscaping and boundary treatments.

Policy 60 seeks to ensure that tall buildings respect the skyline of Cambridge and fit within the existing landscape and townscape.

Section 66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 states that a local authority shall have regard to the desirability of preserving features of special architectural or historic interest, and in particular, Listed Buildings.

Section 72 provides that special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a Conservation Area.

Para. 214 of the NPPF set out that when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation, and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be. Any harm to, or loss of, the significant of a heritage asset should require clear and convincing justification.

Policy 61 of the Cambridge Local Plan (2018) requires development to preserve or enhance the significance of heritage assets, their setting and the wider townscape, including views into, within and out of the conservation area.

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Amenity of Neighbouring Properties and Future Occupants

Policies 55, 56, and 57 of the Cambridge Local Plan require the design of developments to respond positively to their context. Policy 60 of the Cambridge Local Plan outlines criteria for assessing tall buildings. Criterion (d) requires applicants to demonstrate that their proposals will not adversely impact neighbouring buildings and open spaces in terms of overlooking and overshadowing, in addition to ensuring there is adequate sunlight and daylight within and around the proposals. The objective of achieving a high standard of amenity is also contained in paragraph 135 of the NPPF.

Background

The proposals are at pre-application stage. The applicants have worked collaboratively with officers and key stakeholders through pre application discussion. The applicants are working towards submitting the full planning application.

Councillor attendance

Whilst any subsequent planning application relating to this site will be determined by the Planning Committee, all Councillors are invited to attend and take part in this pre-application developer presentation.

Purpose of the meeting

These meetings allow developers an early opportunity to present proposals for future planning applications to elected members of the Council. The process allows Councillors to feed into the process and raise any questions or concerns that can then be addressed by the developer prior to a formal planning application being submitted. Whilst the meetings will be held in public, they do not form part of the formal decision making process. All planning applications will be determined in line with formal processes as adopted by Cambridge City Council.

Format of the Meeting

For each Briefing:

- Introduction by the Head of Planning Services or a Senior Planning Officer
– up to 10 minutes
- Presentation by the developer of the proposal
– up to 30 minutes
- Opportunity for Members to ask questions, raise issues, seek clarification, comment on the apparent positive and less positive aspects of the proposal
– up to 40 minutes

During this part of the meeting it is important that Councillors who may ultimately make the decision on any subsequent planning application do not feel unduly constrained by what they can ask or raise. However they should avoid expressing views that might give any appearance that they are approaching the proposal with a closed mind. The discussion should not be used for negotiations with the developer. These should take place with officers separately from the meeting. Members of the public must refrain from entering into the discussion at the meeting.

- Summing up

– up to 10 minutes

A Planning Department representative will take notes of the meeting, which will be a summary of the proceedings. Nothing said by Councillors at the meeting will in any way be binding on the Committee that subsequently determines the application. The notes will be uploaded to the City Council's website upon completion.

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