

Northern Area Planning Committee

Written Submissions

Tuesday, 23 March 2021 – 10am

Item 5a – P/FUL/2021/00063, Land East of the B3092 South of the River Lodden, Gillingham

No statements received.

Item 5b – P/FUL/2020/00282, Land at E 382085 N 125405, Shaftesbury Road, Gillingham

No statements received.

Item 5c – 2/2018/1437/FUL, St Martin's, Queen Street, Gillingham, SP8 4DZ

Jim & Kate White – Against the application

We understand that the above application will come before Dorset Council Planning on Tuesday 23 March and, as owners of the adjacent property, Lime Tree House, we would be grateful if the committee could give consideration to our comments below.

We have reviewed the latest documentation and plans. Although we accept that the most recent plans are more sympathetic to the site than the previous design, there are still a number of important issues that we believe the committee should give serious consideration to.

1. The electricity sub station is currently positioned in the corner of the adjoining wall in close proximity to our house and abutting the boundary wall which is IN THE CONSERVATION AREA. From the site plan it looks as though it is approximately 4m x 4m which is very large: it is only 9 metres from the back corner of our Grade 2 Listed house. The substation would impinge on the view from our property and create

undue noise. Therefore, we would request that this be moved to an alternative site away from the listed house, wall, and the boundary of the conservation area.

2. We now realise why the proposed building seems smaller than before!

This is because the new plans have only two stories on the street side (west elevation), but three stories on the south side where it looks over our garden. This would have a detrimental impact on the current view from our garden and the view from the town centre. We would be grateful if consideration could be given to lowering the level of the eastern end of the development to avoid this. It could have a further advantage in that it reduces the number of steps from the building for elderly residents.

3. Document 6732/15 Senior Conservation Officer specifically mentions concern regarding the bricks and tiles to be used in the building's construction, and para. 3 mentions our boundary wall. (Please note that we already have a legal agreement on the repair of this wall, only part of which has been completed by Dorset Council). We were slightly alarmed to see the wall described on the site plan as being constructed of brick, when it is clearly constructed of stone and is an integral part of the historic fabric of the listed property at Lime Tree House.

This is a very large development, which we believe does not sit happily on this site, and we trust that the Planning Committee will ensure that every effort is made to protect St Martin's Square and the historic and listed buildings adjoining it.

Adam Fitzgerald, Programme Manager – Building Better Lives – Supports the application

The development of the St Martins Extra Care Housing Scheme has been consistently supported by Dorset Council Commissioners over the course of the last 4 years. This site offers an excellent location for Extra Care Housing, giving people an opportunity to live in the heart of their town in purpose-built accommodation designed to enable them to continue living independently as they age. Its proximity to the high street and other amenities is a great opportunity for people to keep active and engaged in life within the town.

Development of Extra Care Housing is a key strategic objective for Adult Services, as an alternative and replacement to more traditional and less enabling forms of care such as Residential Care Homes. The pressures that population growth of over 65-year olds and rising prevalence of dementia drives a need for more Extra Care Housing across Dorset. This would represent the first such scheme in Gillingham.

Daniel Knight, KSA Architects Ltd – Agent

Thank you Chair,

The proposal is for a 55-unit Extra Care scheme providing ‘desperately’ needed affordable elderly accommodation in Gillingham where an increase in those aged 65 and over is expected to rise by 47% between 2011-2035 (defined by Dorset CC in December 2018). The proposal is brought forward by Magna Housing, a registered social landlord, working with the Local Authority to address this need.

The redevelopment of this site has undergone significant change since its first submission in October 2018. The previous scheme comprised a part 2-3 storey building with linear facade fronting onto St Martins Square. The rear of the building was 3-storeys in height with a flat roof. This scheme was met with objections from both statutory consultees and members of the public concerning various technical issues and its relationship with the neighbouring Conservation Area.

In May 2019 a new scheme was commissioned to address these concerns. Comments from Historic England and the Conservation Officer were considered, and the design team worked with a Historic Buildings consultant to address these.

The latest proposal is a departure from the original scheme. The layout now follows a H-plan framing an area of open space at the front with the retained cherry tree as a focal point, similar to the original built form. To the rear, an open courtyard with views out over the Shreen Water and new wildflower meadow is proposed.

Technical issues around flood risk, drainage, highways and ecology have all been addressed. Following recent amendments to the front elevation, reducing the scheme from 60 to 55-units, the application is now supported by the Conservation Officer and Historic England.

It is noted that Gillingham Town Council have been consulted throughout the design process and resolved to support the earlier 60-unit scheme. Their latest objection has been raised on a proposal where the bulk and scale of the building has been significantly reduced and is at odds with the views of both Historic England and Conservation Officer.

Extra Care, with its associated communal facilities and level of support required, needs to achieve a critical mass in which to be financially viable in both capital delivery terms and in the on-going management / care provision for the scheme. The proposed 55-unit scheme is on the margins of viability but Magna remain committed to its delivery. A further reduction in units or continued delay to the project would cast doubt on the deliverability of this scheme.

We, therefore, respectfully ask members of this committee to take an 'on balance' view to this application, where high quality, sustainable, affordable and much needed elderly Extra Care accommodation is proposed, and following the Planning Officers Recommendation to approve this scheme.

Thank you.