

MC/16/2045

Date Received: 9 May, 2016

Location: Aquarius, 8 Watson Avenue, Horsted, Chatham, ME5 9SH

Proposal: Construction of a single storey side extension and construction of an additional storey to create a first floor for use as a care suite together with roof alterations and installation of an external staircase - Resubmission MC/15/2072

Applicant: Aquarius Residential Care Home

Agent: Mrs Sullivan Nest Design 28 Galpin Street Modbury PL21 0QA

Ward Rochester South & Horsted

Case Officer Doug Coleman

Contact Number 01634 331700

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**Recommendation of Officers to the Planning Committee, to be considered and determined by the Planning Committee at a meeting to be held on 27 July 2016.**

**Recommendation - Approval with Conditions**

- 1 The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.

Reason: To comply with Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended).

- 2 The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: PA06, PA07, PA08, PA09, PA10, PA11, PA12, PA13, PA14, PA15, PA16, PA17 & PA18 received on 17 May 2016.

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning.

- 3 No development above slab level shall take place until details and samples of all materials to be used externally have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority, and the development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To ensure that the appearance of the development is satisfactory and without prejudice to conditions of visual amenity in the locality, in accordance with Policy BNE1 of the Medway Local Plan 2003.

- 4 No development above slab level use shall take place until details showing the submitted parking layout have been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority. The approved parking spaces shall be provided, surfaced, drained and marked out on site, prior to the occupation of any part of the extension herein approved and shall thereafter it be kept available for such use and no permanent development, whether or not permitted by the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015 (or any order amending, revoking or re-enacting that Order) shall be carried out on that area of land or in such a position as to preclude its use.

Reason: Development without provision of adequate accommodation for the parking, loading, off-loading and turning of vehicles is likely to lead to hazardous conditions in the public highway and in accordance with Policy T13 of the Medway Local Plan 2003.

**For the reasons for this recommendation for approval please see Planning Appraisal Section and Conclusions at the end of this report.**

### **Proposal**

This application seeks planning permission for the construction of a single storey side extension and construction of an additional storey to create a first floor for use as a care suite, together with roof alterations and installation of an external staircase. The application is a resubmission of application MC/15/2072, which was refused and subsequently dismissed on appeal. The proposed extension is to provide additional living accommodation within the care home, to provide a separate dementia care unit.

The property is located on the corner of Watson Avenue and Thorndale Close and is currently occupied by a detached bungalow with a steeply pitched roof. The building has been occupied as a care home since 1985. At present, the accommodation within the building comprises 20 rooms on the ground floor, together with an office/waiting room, TV room, dining room, kitchen, conservatory and bathrooms. There is a large single storey flat roof extension to the side/rear fronting onto Thorndale Close.

The proposed extension would be at the front of the building with a return to Thorndale Close. The accommodation within the first floor would comprise 10 bedrooms, a dining room and a lounge. This contrasts with the previous scheme, which proposed an additional 12 bedrooms at first floor, with a roof garden over the existing single storey rear extension.

The proposed two storey element would occupy the entire Watson Avenue frontage and project up to 23m to the rear (south), compared to 30m under the previous scheme. The flat roof over the remaining single storey elements of the building would be replaced by a pitched roof, with a staff room/office in the roofspace immediately to the rear of the proposed extension. That room would be served by four rooflights.

The proposed extension would create an additional 280 sq. m. of floorspace, compared to 340 sq. m. under the previous scheme. Each of the proposed new bedrooms would be 14 sq. m. The front entrance would be clad in timber and a

glazed screen and other materials would be similar to those used in the locality.

Currently, twelve full-time and six part-time staff are employed at the home. Under the proposal, a further seven full-time and five part-time staff would be employed. However, employees are required to cover 24 hours a day, seven days a week and so are not all on duty/working at the same time. It would be reasonable to expect up to half of the staff to be on site at any one time, albeit at night it would likely be less.

### **Relevant Planning History**

MC/15/2072	Part two storey/part first floor extensions to facilitate additional 12 bedrooms at first floor level with roof garden and relocation of fire escape. Refused 29 July, 2015 Appeal dismissed 9 February 2016
MC/13/0420	Replacement of existing conservatory; creation of inner courtyard area; construction of a single storey side extension to provide three additional bedrooms and conversion of loft space including installation of rooflights to provide staff bedroom Approved With Conditions 3 May, 2013
MC/10/2319	Construction of single storey side extension to facilitate 3 bedrooms and conservatory to rear/side Approved With Conditions 20 September, 2010
MC/03/2458	Construction of single storey side/rear extension and single storey rear extension (demolition of garage) Refused 26 January, 2004
MC/99/5351	Erection of a single storey side extension. Approved with Conditions 26/08/1999
ME/90/0953	Single storey side extension to residential home Approved with Conditions 23/08/1990
ME/87/451	Proposed conservatory at rear Decision Approval with Conditions Decided 10 August, 1987
ME/86/169A	Removal of condition iv on planning, consent ME/86/169 20.5.86 and to increase, number of residents to nine (maximum) Approved with Conditions 17 November, 1986
ME/86/169	Two single storey rear extensions Approved with Conditions 20 May, 1986
ME/85/551	Change of use to residential home for, five elderly people

Approved with Conditions 16 September, 1985

## **Representations**

The application has been advertised on site and by individual neighbour notification to the owners and occupiers of neighbouring properties.

**5 letters** have been received raising the following objections:

- Watson Avenue consists mainly of bungalows and a two storey commercial building would be out of character;
- Proposal would increase parking and traffic problems in area;
- The property has already been extended several times;
- Increased noise and disturbance;
- Inconsiderate parking;
- Overlooking;

**11 letters** have been received making the following comments in support of the application:

- This is a good care home and the development should be supported;
- The development will enhance the service provided;
- The home has never caused any parking problems;
- The proposal would be in keeping with the local area;
- The home provides much needed employment in area.

## **Development Plan**

The Development Plan for the area comprises the Medway Local Plan 2003. The policies referred to within this document and used in the processing of this application have been assessed against the National Planning Policy Framework, 2012 and are considered to conform.

## **Planning Appraisal**

### *Background*

There have been a number of planning applications on the site, with planning permission having been granted for the change of use of the original bungalow to a care home in 1985 (ME/85/551). Subsequently, planning permission has been granted for various single storey extensions to the property, the last being in 2013 (MC/13/0420).

Planning permission (MC/15/2072) for part two storey/part first floor extension to provide an additional 12 bedrooms at first floor with a roof garden and relocation of fire escape was refused by Committee on 29 July 2015 on the grounds that:

- 1 Due to the scale and mass of the proposal on such a prominent corner, the extension would represent a dominant form of development and an overdevelopment of the site contrary to Policy BNE1 of the Medway Local

## Plan 2003

- 2 As a result of the increased number of rooms and the lack of off-street car parking, the proposed extension is likely to lead to increased parking pressure and potentially indiscriminate parking on the surrounding residential roads, detrimental to the amenities of the surrounding residents contrary to Policy BNE2 of the Medway Local Plan 2003

A subsequent appeal was dismissed on 9 February 2016.

### *Principle*

Aquarius is a care home located within an urban residential part of Chatham and therefore the principle of an extension is acceptable. Policy H8 supports residential institutions where residential amenity is protected, where they are located close to amenities for more mobile residents and where there is adequate amenity space and adequate parking provision. As this is an existing institution, the main factors to consider are residential amenity and the provision of amenity space.

Policy CF5 supports nursing and special care accommodation, subject to there being no undue loss of amenity to neighbouring residents and it states that proposals should be of a size, design and location that will provide a satisfactory environment for future residents.

Paragraph 50 of the NPPF recognises the need to provide high quality homes for different groups in the community including older people and people with disabilities.

The principle of such a development is therefore considered acceptable and in accordance with Policies H8 and CF5 of the Local Plan and Paragraph 50 of the NPPF.

### *Design and appearance*

The previous application was refused, in part, due to the scale and mass of the proposal, its prominence on a corner, and overdevelopment of the site.

In her decision letter, the Inspector also considered that "*the form and appearance of the flat roofed single storey extension is both utilitarian and unattractive....and has a negative impact on the character and appearance of the street scene*".

In respect of the northern part of the proposed extension, fronting Watson Avenue, the Inspector considered that it "*would generally respect the height, proportions, depth and roof pitch of the adjacent dwellings which front Watson Avenue. Its front (north) elevation would be visually broken with timber cladding and the proposed fenestration would be well balanced and sufficient to avoid long stretches of plain brickwork*". "*In addition, the northern part of the proposed extension would be sited some 15 metres from the modest height bungalow at No.2*". The Inspector concluded that as a result of these factors, on its own, the northern part of the proposed extension would respect and blend in satisfactorily with the street scene.

In respect of the eastern elevation, fronting Thorndale Close, the Inspector also stated that the southern part of the proposed extension would have an uncharacteristically shallow pitched roof, the proposed fenestration would lack rhythm and there would be large stretches of unrelieved brickwork. She concluded that as a result, *“not only would these features emphasise the width and mass of the overall extension fronting Thorndale Close, they would result in a visually stark building. Overall, the eastern elevation of the proposed extension would be totally out of keeping with its surroundings and would be visually dominant and overbearing when viewed from Thorndale Close and from the area around the junction with Watson Avenue”*. The Inspector also commented on the proximity of the extension within 6m of the bungalow at no. 2 and its projection forward of the front building line of the bungalow, stating that *“from the street scene this elevation would add to the bulk and prominence of the extension when viewed from the south”*.

The current application has removed the southern part of the proposed first floor extension and so addresses one of the Inspector's concerns. The alteration has resulted in a two storey building fronting onto Watson Avenue with a ridge height of approx. 9m, which increases the ridge of the existing bungalow by approx. 2.5m, but would still fall below the ridge of the neighbouring semi-detached houses (4 & 6 Watson Avenue) of approx. 9.3m. The Thorndale Close frontage would have a stepped appearance with the ridge falling from 9m to 6m, which would correspond with the ridge of the neighbouring bungalow (2 Thorndale Close).

The existing bungalow and Watson Avenue frontage is white rendered, but in contrast, the extensions fronting Thorndale Close are red brick. It is submitted that materials would match materials used on neighbouring properties which are predominantly red or yellow bricks. In this regard, subject to an appropriate choice of materials, the proposal would enhance the appearance of the locality.

It is considered that the Inspector's concerns in relation to design and visual impact have all been adequately addressed and no objection is therefore raised in terms of design and appearance under BNE1 of the Local Plan and with Paragraphs 56-66 of the NPPF, which seek to promote good design.

### *Amenity*

No. 6 Watson Avenue is a semi-detached property to the west of the application site. The proposed extensions would be on the eastern side of the site. Whilst there are windows on the proposed in the western flank of the first floor element, these would be approx. 12m from the shared boundary and would not overlook the most useable part of this neighbour's garden. On balance, the proposal is not considered to cause concern regarding overlooking. In terms of outlook, sunlight and daylight, the extensions are the opposite side of the building to this neighbour and therefore no concerns are raised.

No. 2 Thorndale Close is situated to the south of the application site. This is a semi-detached bungalow with a small rear garden. This neighbour's garage extends the depth of their garden and is located between their garden and the application site. There is a front door in the side (northern) flank.

In the previous application, the Inspector raised concern in relation to the combined siting, height and depth of the proposed extension and concluded that *"the proposed extension would totally dominate the outlook from the front garden, main access, hall and utility area at No.2. It would also result in a material reduction in natural daylight/skylight within the entrance area and north facing rooms at No.2. Finally, due to their proximity and the level of activity they could generate, the proposed roof garden, salon and staff room would be evident in the small rear garden at No.2"*.

The current proposed two storey extension would be located away from this property and would not have any direct impact. The addition of a pitched roof over the existing single storey extension would increase the height from approx. 3m to 5m but this would not have any adverse impact in terms of light, outlook or privacy. It is considered that the Inspector's concerns have been adequately overcome.

There are no other neighbouring properties within close proximity that will suffer any loss of amenity.

The proposal therefore accords with Policy BNE2 of the Medway Local Plan 2003 and Paragraph 17 of the NPPF.

### *Highways*

The previous application was refused due to likely increase in on-street parking and the impact on the amenities of nearby residents. There are currently two off-road parking spaces and under the dismissed appeal scheme, no additional parking was proposed.

The Council's adopted Parking Standards require one parking space for every six residents. This would equate to 3.3 spaces for the existing home and 5 spaces for the proposed extended care home. In addition, the adopted Parking Standards state that a maximum of one parking space should be provided for each member of staff. This would equate to a maximum of 7.5 spaces for the existing care home and a maximum of 12.5 spaces for the proposed extended care home. From this it is clear that to comply with the Council's current adopted Parking Standards, between 5.3 and 12.25 spaces would normally be required to meet the parking needs of the extended care home, based on up to 50% of staff being present at any one time.

Currently, on-site parking takes place at the front of the site. It is stated that only two spaces are to be provided, with tandem parking up to six cars car park. The Inspector previously considered that this was not unreasonable, given that staff and visitors would likely be known to each other.

She added that *"the spaces are not marked out and so visitors in particular may be unaware of the availability and acceptability of tandem parking. This could be readily addressed by clearly marking out the parking spaces on site, which is something that could be dealt with by condition"*.

The Inspector acknowledged that the site is located in an area that can be easily accessed by bus and is within easy walking and cycling distance of a large residential

area. She noted that the appellant had confirmed that most staff either walk to the site or use public transport and that there are only ever two staff cars parked on site. In addition, the residents receive relatively few visitors, although the care home is likely to be regularly visited by doctors, hairdressers and deliveries.

Taking these factors into account, the Inspector concluded six on-site parking spaces would be highly unlikely to be sufficient to fully cater for the parking needs arising from the proposed development.

However, the Inspector added that *"on-street parking is readily available in the area as a whole, although within the vicinity of the appeal site. Thorndale Close is most conveniently located for residents, staff, etc"*. She concluded that *"there is little evidence to suggest that on-street parking has reached saturation point, or that it has a material impact on highway safety. On-street parking results in inconvenience for residents who may not be able to park in the highway immediately outside their homes and who find it more difficult to access their driveways. Any increased pressure for on-street parking in Thorndale Close could exacerbate any inconvenience for local residents. However, subject to the existing parking area on the appeal site being clearly marked to accommodate the maximum number of vehicles possible, it is unlikely that the proposed scheme would have a material impact on the demand for and availability of on-street parking in the area. In addition any indiscriminate parking across pavements is a matter that can be dealt with under other legislation"*.

For these reasons, the Inspector concluded that the proposal would not have a materially adverse impact on the living conditions of local residents due to increased demand for on-street parking. In this respect the scheme would comply with Policy BNE2 of the Local Plan.

The current proposal is for a slightly smaller scheme and therefore any potential impact on on-street parking would be less. Nevertheless, having regard to the Inspector's comments, a condition is recommended to the effect that the parking area is clearly marked out in accordance with details to be submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority. Subject to that condition, no objection is raised under Policy BNE2 and T13 in terms of parking.

#### *Local Finance Considerations*

There are no Local Finance Considerations raised by this application.

#### **Conclusions and Reasons for Approval**

The principle of the proposed development is acceptable and the latest proposal is considered to have addressed the concerns raised by the appeal Inspector in the previous scheme and is acceptable in terms of design and appearance, neighbour amenity and parking. As such, the development would comply with Policies BNE1, BNE2, H8, CF5 and T13 of the Local Plan and with the NPPF and is recommended for approval.

This application would normally fall to be determined under officers' delegated



powers, but is being reported for Members' consideration, due to the number of letters of representation being received contrary to the officer's recommendation.

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### **Background Papers**

The relevant background papers relating to the individual applications comprise: the applications and all supporting documentation submitted therewith; and items identified in any Relevant History and Representations section within the report.

Any information referred to is available for inspection in the Planning Offices of Medway Council at Gun Wharf, Dock Road, Chatham ME4 4TR and here <http://publicaccess.medway.gov.uk/online-applications/>