

ITEM NO:	<u>Location:</u>	Wymondley Nursing Home, Stevenage Road, Little Wymondley, Hitchin, SG4 7HT
	<u>Applicant:</u>	Mr Kelsall Wymondley Nursing Home Ltd.
	<u>Proposal:</u>	Two storey side extension including three dormer windows to west elevation to provide 15 no. additional bedrooms and en-suite bathrooms with associated residents & staff facilities. Alterations and extension of existing car park so as to provide parking for 31 cars and ancillary works.
	<u>Ref.No:</u>	16/01891/ 1
	<u>Officer:</u>	John Chapman

Date of expiry of statutory period : 03 October 2016

Reason for Delay

Committee cycle (applicant agreed to extension of time for determination until 14th November 2016)

Reason for Referral to Committee

Site area greater than 0.5hectares.

1.0 Relevant History

- 1.1 Permission granted in October 2000 for a two storey front extension to provide 15 replacement bedrooms with en-suite facilities, 2 day rooms, nurse stations, communal bathrooms and WCs and staff room with locker room. Storage, staff rest room and 2 WCs in roof space. Three dormer windows to side (west) elevation.(pap no: 00/01019/1).
- 1.2 Permission for the renewal of the permission referred to at paragraph 1.1 was granted in 2005. (app no 05/01295/1)
- 1.3 Permission granted in 2007 for a Section 73 application to remove Condition 3 of planning application no. 05/01295/1, which restricted the number of residents to 59. (app no 07/01411/1).
- 1.4 Permission for the renewal of the permission referred to at paragraph 1.3 was granted in both 2010 (app no 10/00656/1) and 2013 (app no 13/01132/1).

2.0 Policies

2.1 North Hertfordshire District Local Plan No. 2 - with Alterations

Policy 2 - Green Belt

2.2 National Planning Policy Framework.

Section 9 - Protecting Green Belt Land

3.0 Representations

Wymondley Parish Council - " the Council had no objection, in view of the fact that had previously been renewed (more than once)."

Highway Authority - does not wish to restrict the grant of permission subject to the imposition of 2 conditions, as set out in my recommendation.

Environmental Health - " no objections ".

4.0 Planning Considerations

4.1 Site & Surroundings

- 4.1.1 The nursing home stands in grounds of 0.8ha and is located beyond the eastern village boundary of Little Wymondley. Access to the site is situated approximately 100m to the east of the Kings Cross - Edinburgh railway bridge which runs over the Stevenage Road. The building itself is set back approximately 80m to the north of the entrance to the site. To the east of the application site are open fields so that views of the site and building can be glanced from the elevated A1(M) to the east and the junction of Stevenage Road with Chantry Lane to the south-east.

4.2 Proposal

- 4.2.1 This application seeks permission to erect a two storey front extension to the south east corner of the nursing home building. It would measure a maximum of 31.1 metres in depth and vary in width between 15.9 metres at its southern end, where it would be single storey in height and provide a day room facility, narrowing in width to 10.2 metres for the majority of its length which would be two storeys in height. The extension would have a maximum ridge height of 10 metres with a flat roof area between the existing accommodation and the proposed extension at second floor level being 9.2 metres. Three dormer windows are proposed in the western roof slope closest to the existing extension. In addition, a second smaller day room facility projects westward from the main part of the extension close to the existing nursing home extension at ground floor level only, constructed with a shallow hipped roof design.

In addition it is proposed to alter and extend the existing car park area, thus increasing the number of car park spaces approved under the previous planning applications referred to in the relevant planning history above by a single space, so as to provide parking for a total of 31 cars.

A Design and Access Statement has been submitted by the applicants in support of this application.

4.3 Key Issues

- 4.3.1 There are three key issues to the determination of this application. Firstly, whether the proposal constitutes an appropriate form of development within the Green Belt and, if not, whether "very special circumstances " exist to allow a relaxation of the normal Green Belt policy. Secondly whether the proposed development is acceptable in terms of sustainability issues set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and thirdly whether it is acceptable in terms of highway and car parking issues.

- 4.3.2 With regard to the first issue it has previously been accepted that the proposed extension did not accord with any of the definitions constituting an appropriate form of development in the Green Belt as set out in Section 9 of the NPPF. This is also the case with regard to the proposed alterations to the car park area to serve the

site, so as to provide a car park area for a total of 31 cars.

- 4.3.3 Accordingly, for the application to be acceptable, and allow a relaxation of the normal policy presumption against "inappropriate development" it needs to be accompanied by "very special circumstances ". In this case the applicant has provided a Design and Access Statement setting out these circumstances which, under the heading exceptional circumstances " states as follows:

"It is understood that any development is restricted with the green Belt. However, it is important to protect what little employment that is available within these areas, especially, with the additional residential sites being identified in the Wymondley area in the proposed District Local Plan.

Wymondley Care Home is an established care home; however, it has to accommodate ever changing requirements and standards. Although the Care Standards Regulations 2001 no longer currently require enlarged bedroom facilities with en-suites for homes that were operating before 31st March 2002, all new and extended/converted homes must comply with these new requirements. As a consequence, the demands of the market-place are gradually having an influence on all homes, especially those registered pre-31st March 2002.

Of course, when residents were only choosing between homes that complied with the old standards, there was only a modest amount of pressure to upgrade facilities. However, as time passes, with new homes being commissioned and existing homes voluntarily upgrading their facilities, residents are naturally tempted to choose a home that offers larger rooms with en-suite facilities.

Whilst this is undoubtedly raising standards, it does mean that in the long-term all homes will eventually have to provide rooms with higher specifications, or else become unprofitable due to lower occupancy rates. It is in recognition of this that the permission was renewed in its current form in 2010. This latest application will have all new rooms built to the latest Care Standards and will provide the capacity for the existing home to be upgraded to the latest standards in time.

We believe that the provision of this extension will secure the long term viability of the home protecting not only, the service, but much needed local employment. "

These circumstances provide similar reasoning as have been made on three previous occasions for the proposed extension. I consider that since similar factors have previously been accepted as providing the necessary "very special circumstances " for allowing the proposed development there is no planning basis for reaching a different conclusion upon this application. Furthermore in support of the reason for requiring the previously approved car park area to be reconfigured and extended the applicant states:

" The current car park is large enough for 30 cars but the permission which is due to expire on 19th August 2016 planned to build over some of the existing car park and it was intended to use some of the patio directly in front of the nursing home as additional parking to replace that lost by the construction. The current application now replaces the car park due to be lost with replacement spaces adjacent to the existing car park, thus avoiding using the patio area at all for parking. "

These are also considered to provide reasonable grounds for providing the "very special circumstances "required for this part of the application.

4.3.4 Turning to the second issue the proposal needs to be considered in terms of sustainability criteria set out in the NPPF, which relate to economic, social and environmental roles. In this respect I consider that the proposed development would give rise to both economic and social gains to the community, given the existing use of the site and limited mobility of the residents, insofar as travel options are concerned. Furthermore, I do not consider the environmental impact would be significant since this would largely be mitigated by the existing mature landscaping within the grounds and by proposed additional planting, which is subject to control by the condition set out in my recommendation and which would lead to long term environmental enhancement of the site.

4.3.5 Finally, members will note that insofar as highway matters are concerned the Highway Authority does not wish to restrict the grant of permission subject to the imposition of the 2 conditions set out in my recommendation. With regard to parking matters the previous permissions would have altered the existing car park area, whilst maintaining the number of spaces which presently exist within the site. However, the approved plans did not give an indication of how or where all of these spaces would have been provided within the site. Notwithstanding this fact it is not considered that the area now proposed for the new car park would cause any significant difference to the openness of the Green Belt, in comparison to that which has previously been approved. In addition, it is not felt that there is any sustainable planning reason to object to the increase in car parking provision within the site from 30 to 31 spaces. As a result it is considered that the proposed car park layout and the increase in car parking provision to allow for 31 cars to be parked within the new car park area is unobjectionable.

4.4 **Conclusion**

4.4.1 Given the previous planning history relating to the proposed development, which included " very special circumstances " for allowing the extension (and which have again been put forward in support this application), that the extension and the changes to the layout of the car park layout (which only increases the provision of parking within the site by a single space) would not cause any significant harm to the openness of the Green Belt, that sustainability criteria set out in the NPPF are satisfied and that the Highway Authority do not raise any highway grounds for objection, I consider this application to be acceptable.

5.0 Legal Implications

5.1 In making decisions on applications submitted under the Town and Country Planning legislation, the Council is required to have regard to the provisions of the development plan and to any other material considerations. The decision must be in accordance with the plan unless the material considerations indicate otherwise. Where the decision is to refuse or restrictive conditions are attached, the applicant has a right of appeal against the decision.

6.0 Recommendation

6.1 That planning permission be **GRANTED** subject to the following conditions:

1. The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of 3 years from the date of this permission.

Reason: To comply with the provisions of Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

2. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out wholly in accordance with the details specified in the application and supporting approved documents and plans listed above.

Reason: To ensure the development is carried out in accordance with details which form the basis of this grant of permission.

3. The extension hereby permitted shall not be commenced until details of the improvement of the existing access have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: So that access to the site for the construction of the extension, and thereafter for visitors and staff, is made easier and safer for all highway users of County Road C171.

4. The access shall be constructed in a hard surfacing material for the first 6 metres from the edge of the carriageway.

Reason: To prevent loose material from passing onto the public highway which may be detrimental to highway safety.

Proactive Statement

Planning permission has been granted for this proposal. Discussion with the applicant to seek an acceptable solution was not necessary in this instance. The Council has therefore acted proactively in line with the requirements of the Framework (paragraphs 186 and 187) and in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015.