

**REPORT TO THE DEVELOPMENT CONTROL  
COMMITTEE**

Report No.

<b>Date of Meeting</b>	20 <sup>th</sup> February 2008
<b>Application Number</b>	07/02875/FUL
<b>Site Address</b>	4, 6 and 6a Wood Lane, Chippenham
<b>Proposal</b>	Demolition of existing dwellings and erection of 2/3 storey home for homeless single persons (sui generis use class) consisting of 15 bed-sit type rooms and associated accommodation together with 6 self-contained flats
<b>Applicant</b>	Westlea Housing Association
<b>Town/Parish Council</b>	Chippenham
<b>Grid Ref</b>	392212 172983
<b>Type of applications</b>	Full Planning Application

**Reason for the application being considered by Committee**

- This application has been submitted to the Committee for decision under the scheme of delegation in force after the 8<sup>th</sup> April 2002 because more than 5 letters of objection have been received.

**Summary of Report**

The application is for the development of residential accommodation for homeless persons with support needs. The site is within the settlement framework boundary and Conservation Area of Calne.

This report is prepared to allow Members of DC Committee to consider the proposal in the context of planning policy and guidance. The key points to consider are as follows:

- Implications of DC Core Policy C3, Housing Policy H3 and development in Conservation Areas Policy HE1
- Principle of development
- Siting, layout, design and impact upon the Conservation Area
- Effect upon residential amenity of existing properties
- Access, parking and highway safety
- Other non-material planning considerations

**Officer Recommendation**

Planning Permission be GRANTED subject to conditions

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## Proposal and Site Description

Already managed by Westlea Housing Association, the application site currently provides residential accommodation for 14 persons, taking the form of three separate properties, arranged into a single detached and pair of semi-detached houses (the semi-detached pair being rented out and the single detached unit used as a hostel for young people with drug related problems). The houses themselves are of generic early-mid C20th appearance and have a neutral impact upon the wider Conservation Area within which it sits. To the north of the site is a small public garden (Memorial Garden), with an access road and expansive public car park surrounding the rear and southern boundaries, with the large Police building on the opposite side of Wood Lane.

The proposed development would demolish the existing dwellings and redevelop the site in a comprehensive manner to provide accommodation for 21 homeless persons. The scheme involves the provision of 15 bedrooms (with associated staff and support facilities and training rooms) and 6 "move-on" flats for residents requiring a lower level of support prior to leaving for fully independent accommodation elsewhere.

It is anticipated that the homeless persons catered for will be single and have complex support needs. They may also be young (16-17 year olds) and considered vulnerable after leaving the care of other institutions. It has been suggested that residents will stay for a maximum of 1 year, but the average is expected to be in the region of 6 months. Referrals to the accommodation may come from any Local Authority within Wiltshire (excluding Salisbury), self-referral or any other referral agency within the local area.

The accommodation will require at least 6 members of staff providing cover from 08:00 – 22:00 7 days a week, with a security presence at all other times.

## Relevant Planning History

Application number	Proposal	Decision
00/02362/OUT	One dwelling	Permitted 14/11/00

## Consultations

**Town Council** - No objection. However, the screen of trees on the east side of site, which is probably outside of the development site, must not be damaged during this development and should, if possible, be strengthened.

**Wiltshire County Council Highways** – In view of the proposed use of the site and the close proximity of the town centre facilities, public car park and public transport, the proposed number of parking spaces is adequate. No objections subject to conditions

**WCC Archaeology** – The area is in the known extent of the Medieval settlement of Chippenham and therefore there is potential for archaeological remains. Recommend that an archaeological evaluation be carried out in advance of planning consent.

**Wiltshire Constabulary** – Following negotiations with the applicant, no objections are raised. The following specific points have been made by the Crime Reduction/Architectural Liaison Officer:

1. The development will be applying for full Secure by Design (SBD) accreditation which means that I will be involved fully in the process and making sure the design complies to the prescribed criteria
2. The property will be staffed continuously (24/7) this should allay the problems my colleagues have previously had when attending similar premises out of hours
3. Having staff will also give the premises the best form of surveillance

4. I have supplied Westlea housing with details of a number of accredited CCTV companies who are members of professional bodies. These companies will be able to provide their expertise in the positioning and type of fittings that the site requires
5. As the site will be attaining SBD accreditation, all of the social spaces will be monitored and have adequate levels of perimeter security. As well as doors and windows to SBD specification
6. The fact that the scheme will achieve SBD provides evidence to me that crime prevention issues have been addressed for the residents, staff and surrounding properties

## **Representations**

In response to revised plans - Fifteen (15) of letters of objection that have been received – including one from Causeway Residents Association.

Summary of key and relevant points raised:

- Proposal does not respect the local character and distinctiveness of the locality – scale (particularly the main building's 2/3 storey height), siting and design
- Impact upon the Conservation Area and nearby listed building
- Represents piecemeal development of the area
- Does not provide for other infrastructure contributions
- Overlooking adjoining gardens and properties
- Increased vehicular movements along a narrow road and blocking of existing pedestrian and vehicular accesses
- Inadequate on-site parking proposed
- There is no need for such a proposal to be located within the town centre
- Noise and disturbance

## **Planning Considerations**

### Principle of development

The site lies inside the defined settlement framework of Chippenham. In common with other forms of residential development, the principle of hostel type accommodation would be appropriate to its town centre location. Indeed, whilst there is no specific policy relating to homeless persons accommodation within the adopted Local Plan, Policy H3 does make reference to residential institutions.

Clearly the acceptability of the proposed development also needs to be assessed in detail against other policies within the adopted Local Plan, together with supporting national planning guidance.

This proposal is intended to meet an acknowledged need for such accommodation in North Wiltshire. The Housing Enabling Officer has commented that the current gap in accommodation has resulted in many having to be unsuitably accommodated in temporary B&B type accommodation, which currently has now become a significant cost to NWDC. In the context of this scheme meeting a local need, it is not thought reasonable, or indeed necessary, for further infrastructure contributions to be sought under Policy C2 of the adopted Local Plan.

### Siting, layout, design and impact upon Conservation Area

Although to the north of the site there are several quality period buildings, dating from the C19th, (notably the former infants/primary school), the immediate locality of the site is primarily defined by

more commercially orientated activities, buildings and land uses, with more suburban type residential properties to the south and west, albeit mainly presenting to different road frontages other than Wood Lane.

Attention has been drawn to the Chippenham Conservation Area Statement, in which it states that this part of Wood lane should be the subject of a co-ordinated assessment and redevelopment, including the Police Station, car park, motor garage and the east side of the lane so that future piecemeal and incremental development is avoided. However, that statement is unadopted for decision making purposes. As such it represents little more than an aspiration, carrying no formal or statutory weight and therefore provides very little help when considering a submitted planning application such as this, which must be assessed on its own merits.

Reflecting the division in function (supported living and move on flats) the accommodation has been separated into two distinct buildings. The entire site is to be separated from the surrounding car park and Memorial Garden by a 2.0m wall, with a modest private amenity garden/space of its own to the rear. Car and secure cycle parking, together with the majority of the bin storage is to be positioned to the front of the main building, with a central point of access and building entrance.

The larger of the two buildings is to be of a three storey design (albeit with the accommodation in the roofspace), with a proposal to make use of natural materials to the most publically visible elevations accompanying a complimentary tone of render elsewhere. Earlier elevational plans have included additional detailing surrounding the fenestration in order to, presumably, provide a visual break to an otherwise quite significant expanse elevation (particularly to the west and north). However, such detailing appears to simultaneously also prevent any discernable architectural rhythm or continuity. It is suggested that such changes to materials and detailing should be removed from the submitted plans and controlled through suitably worded conditions.

The “move-on” flats take the form of a completely separate, more domestically scaled two-storey, and predominantly brick built building to the south. This building shares little in terms of outward appearance or scale with the larger building

The basic scale of a three-storey building is not thought to be entirely inappropriate in the context of an area of quite a mix of building scale and appearance, neither is the principle of a separation of the supported living and move-on flats accommodation. However, both the Conservation officer and Urban Design Officer have identified architectural shortcomings within the proposal, most notably the manner of the rather abrupt transition between the two buildings and the development’s rather unbalanced presentation to Wood Lane.

Recently submitted plans are considered to improve the general appearance of the buildings to a point that the character and appearance of the Conservation Area is at least preserved, as is required by Policy HE1 of the adopted Local Plan. In particular the proposal now includes a reduction in roof pitch and, therefore, height to the main building together with a more appropriate close mortared verge treatment. It also presents a more balanced elevation to the main public views through a consistent use of gable ends for both buildings

#### Effect of development upon residential amenity of existing properties

The application site is surrounded by a mix of residential and commercial development. However, to the south and east there is a significant expanse of car parking, together with an access road serving those properties fronting onto The Causeway and Burlands Road. Notwithstanding the scale of the building, because of the degree of separation afforded by the car park, there is unlikely to be any significant impact upon the amenities of those residents. Similarly, residential properties at Bakehouse Close to the north and The Paddocks to the south-west are separated from the site by the memorial gardens and the Police Station/Wood lane itself respectively. In any event second floor windows are limited to three bedroom windows facing east/west respectively.

Additional noise and disturbance generated by the actual operation of the accommodation cannot be

considered to be any more than would be associated with any other form of residential development. Indeed, given the likely residents, it is reasonable to assume that car use would be considerable less. It should be noted that the particular characteristics of the residents are not necessarily a planning consideration (see separate section below).

#### Access, parking and highway safety

The scheme has been developed on the presumption that car ownership amongst residents will be negligible. Therefore the four off street spaces shown will meet the requirements for visitors and staff. WCC Highways are satisfied with this approach and have identified the site as have very good access to public car parks, town centre facilities and public transport.

The application is to be physically separated (by a wall) from the access road and car park to the east and south and from the Memorial garden to the north. A single new vehicular and pedestrian access is to be created from Wood Lane. As a result, the development will certainly avoid any potential for conflict in traffic movements, as well as any inadvertent blocking of accesses.

The condition and width of Wood Lane is considered to be of the appropriate standard to allow for access to the development. Again, WCC Highways have not objected in this regard.

#### Other material and non-material planning considerations

Understandable concerns have been raised by some local residents regarding the type of residents the proposal will accommodate together with the perception of increased criminality, disturbance and loss of social cohesion associated with such development. However, whether those fears are well founded or not, except in very rare and particular circumstances the identity of the user / type of person to be accommodated is not a planning consideration. The inference is that anti-social behaviour and/or criminality are matters that can and should be controlled through separate legislation, usually operated by the Police and that this can occur in any residential area where the nature of the occupiers is also uncontrolled by the planning regime.

Indeed, the fact remains that the application site already partly operates as a hostel type use, similar to that proposed (albeit at a more limited scale). Whilst Wiltshire Constabulary have indeed pointed out that this site has historically given rise to a significant amount of anti-social behaviour and crime and that Police Officers have had problems gaining entry, they have acknowledged that the proposed 24 hour management of the new development would improve on the current situation (see Wiltshire Constabulary's full comments above).

In disregarding the "fear" of anti-social or neighbourly behaviour as a material planning consideration, the appropriate test for this proposal should therefore require an assessment as to whether the proposed use would cause a diminution of residential character and amenity in the area as a whole. In this particular instance the site is separated from the immediate locality of residential development and represents a reasonable and necessary intensification of an existing use class. Furthermore, there is not thought to be an overconcentration of this type of provision/accommodation in this part of Chippenham.

**Conclusion:**

It is recognised that the principle building within the proposal perhaps lacks the distinction or readily identifiable architectural style that this site demands. However, in view of the acceptability of the basic layout submitted, and the improvements made by the most recently amended plans, it is considered that the proposal would at least preserve the character and appearance of the Conservation Area, as required by Policy HE1 of the adopted North Wiltshire Local Plan 2011.

In all other respects the proposal is considered to comply with relevant planning policy.

**Recommendation:****APPROVE subject to the following 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.

2. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out strictly in accordance with the approved plans subject to such minor amendments to the development as may be approved in writing under this condition by the local planning authority.

Reason: To ensure that the development is implemented in accordance with this decision in the interests of public amenity, but also to allow for the approval of minor variations which do not materially affect the permission.

3. Prior to the commencement of the development hereby permitted, details of the proposed and existing levels across the site (including details of the finished floor levels of all buildings hereby permitted) shall be submitted to, and approved in writing by, the local planning authority. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the details so approved.

Reason: To ensure a satisfactory layout in the interests of the amenity of the area.

4. Prior to the commencement of the development hereby permitted, details of any external chimneys, flues, vents or other ventilation equipment shall be submitted to, and approved in writing by, the local planning authority. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details unless otherwise agreed in writing by the local planning authority.

Reason: In the interests of the amenity of the area and the amenity of local residents.

5. The development hereby permitted shall not be commenced until details of the landscaping of the site, including wherever appropriate the retention of existing trees, have been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the local planning authority.

The approved landscaping scheme shall be implemented within one year of either the first occupation or use of the development, whether in whole or in part, or its substantial completion, whichever is the sooner, and shall be maintained thereafter for a period of not less than five years. The maintenance shall include the replacement of any tree or shrub which is removed, destroyed or dies by a tree or shrub of the same size and species as that which it replaces, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the local planning authority.

Reason: In the interests of amenity.

6. Prior to the commencement of the development hereby permitted, details of materials to be used externally, including all boundary walls/fences to the site, shall have been submitted to, and approved in

writing by, the local planning authority. The development shall be built in the materials approved.

Reason: In the interests of visual amenity.

7. Prior to the commencement of the development hereby permitted, a sample panel of the external stonework shall be made available on site to be inspected and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The development shall not commence until such approval has been given in writing. The external stonework shall be in accordance with the approved plans and shall match the approved sample in respect of type, colour, size and bedding of the stone, type of pointing and mortar mix.

Reason: In the interests of visual amenity.

8. Prior to the commencement of the development hereby permitted, details of all new external joinery shall be submitted to, and approved in writing by, the local planning authority. These details shall include depth of reveal, materials and full drawings including both horizontal and vertical sections, to a scale of not less than 1:10. The development/works shall be completed in accordance with the approved details and at no time shall the approved joinery be altered without the prior written approval of the local planning authority.

Reason: To enable the local planning authority to be satisfied with the completed appearance of the development.

9. Prior to the commencement of development details of the construction of all eaves and verges shall have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Development shall be carried out in accordance with those details approved.

Reason: In the interests of securing a suitable architectural treatment.

10. Prior to the commencement of development full constructional details, including large scale cross-sections of the proposed framing where necessary, of the glass stair tower shall have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Development shall be carried out in accordance with those details approved.

Reason: In the interests of securing a suitable architectural treatment.

11. Notwithstanding the provisions of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995 (or any order revoking and re-enacting that Order with or without modification) no further windows or opening other than those already shown on the submitted plans above ground floor level shall be introduced into the elevation(s) of the building(s) hereby permitted.

Reason: In the interests of residential amenity.

12. Fencing for the protection of any retained trees/hedges/shrubs shall be erected in accordance with the approved details before any equipment, machinery or materials are brought onto the site for the purposes of the development and shall be maintained until all equipment, machinery and surplus materials have been removed from the site. Nothing shall be stored or placed in any area fenced in accordance with this condition and the ground levels within those areas shall not be altered, nor shall any excavation be made, without the written consent of the local planning authority.

Reason: In the interests of protecting the existing trees/hedges/shrubs on the site during construction.

13. The development hereby approved shall not be occupied until 4 parking spaces have been provided within the curtilage of the site.

Reason: In the interests of highway safety.

14. Before the access hereby approved is first brought into use the turning space shown on the submitted plan shall be properly consolidated and surfaced to the satisfaction of the local planning

authority. Such turning space shall be kept free of obstruction at all times.

Reason: In the interests of highway safety.

15. The parking and turning areas shall be properly consolidated and surfaced (not loose stone or gravel) in accordance with details which shall have been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority.

Reason: In the interests of highway safety.

16. Provision shall be made within the site for the disposal of surface water so as to prevent its discharge onto the highway, details of which shall have been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority.

Reason: In the interests of highway safety.

17. Prior to the commencement of development constructional details of the proposed cycle parking and bin storage enclosures shall have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local planning Authority. Development shall be carried out in accordance with those details approved.

Reason: In the interests of visual amenity.

18. The accommodation hereby permitted shall be used as a hostel for the temporary housing of single homeless persons with support needs and for no other purpose, unless otherwise agreed in respect of a separate planning permission in that behalf.

Reason: In the interests of clarity and in order to address the requirements of Local Plan policy.

**Informatives:**

**Plans:**

Actual plan refs. to be advised.

**Reason for Decision**

The proposal is considered to be in accordance with Policies C3, H3 and HE1 of the adopted North Wiltshire Local Plan 2011.

<b>Appendices:</b>	<b>None</b>
<b>Background Documents Used in the Preparation of this Report:</b>	<b>1.20; 2.02; 2.07; 4.02; 4.04; 4.07</b>