



Submission of Romsey & District Society, to Planning Appeal, APP/C1760/W/24/3342514, Edwina Mountbatten House, Broadwater Road, Romsey, Hampshire.

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Summary

The proposal is contrary to the development plan policies E1, E9 and LHW4.

The proposed development due to its highly visible position, form, mass height and limited variation in elevational treatment, will compete with rather than complement adjoining buildings. This applies particularly to the listed buildings in Palmerston Street and the Manor House. It will result in harm to the Romsey Conservation Area and the listed buildings close by for which a clear and convincing case has not been made. The public benefits such as they are do not justify the proposed development and do not outweigh the harm to the setting of designated heritage assets.

Introduction

1.This submission represents the view of the Romsey & District Society (RDS) as delegated to its Planning Committee to respond to the planning application ref 23/01700/FULLS and appeal submitted by Churchill Retirement Living which was refused by Test Valley Borough Council (TVBC) on the 25th March 2024.

2.The RDS objected to the application in its response of 4th August 2023.

3.This submission focuses on the first two reasons for refusal which are relevant to the RDS's objections. It sets out why the RDS considers that there is harm to the designated heritage assets and that the benefits identified by the appellant do not outweigh that harm.

4.The RDS has prepared this submission on the basis of the material publicly available on the planning application file as at June 12th 2024 deadline. The RDS may wish to make a further response in the light of the cases submitted by the appellant and TVBC to the inquiry.

Background

5. The Romsey & District Society was founded in 1974 following a huge public protest about the destruction of fine old houses in Romsey to make way for new. It focuses on local planning, environment and countryside issues. The aim of the Society is to promote high standards of planning and architecture in the area, and to secure the preservation, protection, development and improvement of features of natural, historical or public interest in the area.

The Society runs a diverse programme of interesting, informative and entertaining events and activities. It has several sub-committees and working groups which report to an Executive Committee. Membership is healthy at around 650.

Context

6.The site is located at one of the main entrances to the historic core of Romsey. Palmerston Street is an important gateway to the centre of the town, particularly for vehicles approaching from the A3090 By-Pass and also from north via The Hundred. Indeed, it could be likened to the town centre's front door.

7.The appeal site is located adjoining the Romsey Conservation Area. The Conservation Area was designated in 1970 and extended in 1983. Until the 2020 review the site was within the Conservation Area, however following a fresh appraisal it was removed for the following reason:

Exclusion of Edwina Mountbatten House (EMH)

Justification: “ This building dates to the later 20th century and is of no heritage value. Its larger footprint means it does not reflect the historic character of the area.”

Extract from Romsey Conservation Area; Boundary Amendment Report November 2020 TVBC page 8.

8.The character of the immediate area around the site has a number of component parts. Of the most significance and importance is the historic Palmerston Street which is lined with numerous listed buildings and which is within the Romsey Conservation Area.

9.The appellant’s Heritage Statement May 2023 identifies the numerous designated heritage assets in close proximity on Palmerston Street opposite the site and further north on both sides, Mill Cottage, Red Lodge and Broadlands a Grade 2* Registered Park and Garden, ref paragraph 3.5.5 page 12 and Figure 2 page 36.

10.The Heritage Statement is clear in recognising that the site is located close to a number of listed buildings and is also within the setting of the Romsey Conservation Area ref paragraph 3.5.4 page 12.

‘The character of the immediate area (east and north) is that of terraces, cottages and townhouses sitting on the kerbside of historic burgage plots. The roads are narrow and the density of the existing properties is tightly knit. Squat two-storey buildings with simple detailing sitting directly adjacent to three-storey buildings with grander detailing and proportion is common to the area. The character to the west is more fractured; a combination of open car parks and large footprint buildings’. Ref paragraph 2.1 page 12 Design and Access Statement.

11.The Heritage Statement, of the appellant, includes a number of photographs of the site and its relationship with the immediate area ref pages 16-26 and which illustrate the historic character of the area.

12.The Tadburn Lake located on the appeal site’s southern boundary is one of the most important water courses flowing in and around the town. It and the landscape features either side of it provide an attractive corridor for the A3090. The South of Romsey Town Centre Masterplan 2020 recognises it as an important landscape feature, ref page 22.

The Application

13.The application is for the redevelopment of the Edwina Mountbatten House (EMH) to form 47 retirement living apartments for older persons with associated communal facilities, 16 parking spaces and landscaping.

14.The proposed development would involve the demolition of the existing building which is predominantly single storey with the exception of the northern elevation on to Broadwater Road which is two storeys in height. The EMH comprised 17 single occupancy rooms and 8 independent living flats.

15.The proposed building comprises a single u-shaped block of two and three storeys with apartments facing onto Broadwater Road, Palmerston Street and the A3090 and inwards to a central amenity area.

16.Access to the site and the parking area is off Broadwater Road, ref drwg 10123RS-PAO1-B.

17.The RDS objected to the original scheme for the following reasons (summary)

- Compromises future development of the town centre.
- Overdevelopment of the site and adverse impact on the conservation area and listed buildings.
- Generic pastiche design with no relationship to local character. Repetitive fenestration.
- Support Conservation Officers objections to original submission.
- Overpower small scale properties in Palmerston Street resulting in overbearing composition.
- Adverse impact on entrance to the town.
- Entire concept is flawed.
- Any decision should be withheld until the Borough has endorsed the South of the Town Centre Development Plan.

18.The RDS maintains its objections in respect of the revised scheme.

19.The RDS considers that the amended plans have made no material difference to the initial submission for 47 apartments. The revised plans retained the height and bulk of the proposed building on its elevated site in relation, not least, to the small listed dwellings facing the appeal site in Palmerston Street. Its proximity to the highway was also unchanged.

20.These factors present a scheme which the RDS considers offers undue bulk and inappropriate design resulting in an overbearing impact on these modest sized properties. The design of the building is of a typical typology that lacks a sense of place that this site and the Town deserves.

21.The details of the amendments to the fenestration, materials, corner formations of the building and the changes to the door style for each unit facing the highway do not

overcome the RDS's objections in relation to the character of the area, the setting of the Conservation Area and the 'gateway' approach to the centre of the town.

22. TVBC set out a number of reasons for refusal, several of which relate to the absence of legal agreement covering specific matters. The Society in this submission will focus on reasons 1 and 2 as they are the most relevant to its objections:

1. By virtue of the scale, bulk and design of the proposal the development would be detrimental to the special architectural and historic importance of the setting of the Romsey Conservation Area and the setting of heritage assets. This harm is compounded further when the proposal is viewed from the roundabout junction of the A27 and Palmerston Street. It is acknowledged that the development would result in less than substantial harm to the significance of these designated heritage assets and the conservation area. However, the public benefits arising from the development would not outweigh this real and identified harm. As such, the proposal is considered to be contrary to Policies E1 and E9 of the Test Valley Borough Revised Local Plan (2016).

2. The proposed development by virtue of the size, scale, mass and proximity to dwellings on Palmerston Street will result in a sense of enclosure and overbearing impact on 38-48 Palmerston Street & 30-36 Palmerston Street to the detriment of the residential amenities of these dwellings, contrary to policy LHW4 of the Test Valley Borough Revised Local Plan (2016).

Policy Context

23. The starting point for considering proposals for development is the Development Plan for the area. Applications should be determined in accordance with it unless material considerations indicate otherwise, ref section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. The Development Plan for the area is the Test Valley Borough Revised Local Plan adopted in January 2016.

24. In respect of the objections of the RDS the relevant Development Plan policies are:

Policy E1: High Quality Development in the Borough

Development will be permitted if it is of a high quality in terms of design and local distinctiveness. To achieve this development:

a) should integrate, respect and complement the character of the area in which the development is located in terms of layout, appearance, scale, materials and building styles;

b) should not detract from the dominance of, or interrupt important views of, key landmark buildings or features;

c) should be laid out to provide connectivity between spaces and a positive relationship between public and private spaces; and

d) makes efficient use of the land whilst respecting the character of the surrounding area and neighbouring uses.

Development will not be permitted if it is of poor design and fails to improve the character, function and quality of the area.

Policy E9: Heritage

Development and/or works affecting a heritage asset will be permitted provided that:

a) it would make a positive contribution to sustaining or enhancing the significance of the heritage asset taking account of its character, appearance and setting; and

b) the significance of the heritage asset has informed the proposal through an assessment proportionate to its importance.

Development which will result in the substantial harm to or loss of the significance of a designated heritage asset will not be permitted unless:

c) it is outweighed by the substantial benefit to the public of bringing the site back into use; or

d) the nature of the heritage asset prevents all reasonable use; and

e) its conservation cannot be achieved by either a viable alternative use, support from public ownership or funding from other sources; and

f) the harm or loss is outweighed by the benefit of bringing the site back into use.

Development which will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset will be considered against the public benefit of the proposal, including securing a viable use.

The merits of a development affecting an undesignated heritage asset will be balanced against the scale of the harm or loss, either directly or indirectly, to the significance of that heritage asset.

The Council will only permit the loss of the whole or part of a heritage asset where it can be demonstrated that the new development will proceed after the loss has occurred.

Policy LHW4: Amenity Development will be permitted provided that:

a) it provides for the privacy and amenity of its occupants and those of neighbouring properties;

b) in the case of residential developments, it provides for private open space in the form of gardens or communal open space which are appropriate for the needs of residents; and

c) it does not reduce the levels of daylight and sunlight reaching new and existing properties or private open space to below acceptable levels.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

25. The NPPF 2023 is a material consideration, in particular, with regard to this appeal, the advice on heritage which is set out in paragraphs 195-214. The key elements of the advice are set out below.

26. Paragraph 203 provides a framework for what the decision maker should take account of.

In determining applications, local planning authorities should take account of:

a) the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;

b) the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and

c) the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.

27. Paragraph 206 of the NPPF addresses the issue of harm to a designated heritage asset.

Any harm to or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting) should require clear and convincing justification. Substantial harm to or loss of:

a) grade II listed buildings or grade II registered parks or gardens should be exceptional.

b) assets of the highest significance..... grade I and grade II listed buildings and grade I and II* registered parks and gardens..... should be wholly exceptional.*

28. The advice in paragraph 206 is important as it sets out that **any** harm needs clear and convincing justification.

29. The following paragraphs introduce the levels of harm and how they should be approached in respect of the merits of development.

30. Paragraph 207 advises on the approach when development would lead to substantial harm. Criteria d) i.e. the most relevant to the current appeal.

Where a proposed development will lead to substantial harm to (or total loss of significance of) a designated heritage asset, local planning authorities should refuse consent, unless it can be demonstrated that the substantial harm or total loss is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh that harm or loss, or all of the following apply:

d) the harm or loss is outweighed by the benefit of bringing the site back into use.

31.Paragraph 208 advises on the approach when development would lead to less than substantial harm.

Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.

32.The NPPF also includes advice on the issue of design which it sees as an important component of sustainable development. Paragraph 131 advises that:

The creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities. Being clear about design expectations, and how these will be tested, is essential for achieving this. So too is effective engagement between applicants, communities, local planning authorities and other interests throughout the process.

33. Paragraph 135 provides a framework for assessing the merits of a development in respect of design.

Planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments:

a) will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;

b) are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping;

c) are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities);

d) establish or maintain a strong sense of place, using the arrangement of streets, spaces, building types and materials to create attractive, welcoming and distinctive places to live, work and visit;

e) optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development (including green and other public space) and support local facilities and transport networks; and

f) create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users and where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion and resilience.

34.The NPPF is clear, in paragraph 137 that the design of a scheme should be an evolutionary process which includes engaging with the local community.

Design quality should be considered throughout the evolution and assessment of individual proposals. Early discussion between applicants, the local planning authority and local community about the design and style of emerging schemes is important for clarifying expectations and reconciling local and commercial interests. Applicants should work closely with those affected by their proposals to evolve designs that take account of the views of the community. Applications that can demonstrate early, proactive and effective engagement with the community should be looked on more favourably than those that cannot.

The Response of the Romsey & District Society

Impact of the Proposed Development on the Built Environment.

Policy E1 High Quality Development in the Borough

35.The site is an important one in the context of the setting of Romsey Town Centre, the Conservation Area and a significant number of listed buildings. In this context, the advice set out in Historic England’s Statement of Heritage Significance Advice Note 12 is relevant. It advises a staged approach to decision making in applications affecting heritage assets. The design process should be informed by an analysis of the importance of the setting at the outset.

36. It is not clear the extent to which the design has been informed by such an analysis. A pre-application submission was made to TVBC in January 2023. The initial proposals presented when compared with the current proposal have not fundamentally changed. The Heritage Statement in support of the application was written in March 2023 and seeks to justify the proposed design.

37.The design appears to have been driven by the appellant’s brief set out in paragraph 1.6, page 8 of the Design and Access Statement which includes a single building allowing for secure access to all communal facilities, a minimum of 25 apartments, internal level access throughout and a single secure entrance from the car park. The starting point appears to be the operational and commercial requirements of the appellant. In the submitted Design and Access Statement there are numerous references to other Churchill schemes in Romsey and elsewhere. Indeed they are described as precedents. ref paragraph 1.8 of the Design and Access Statement.

38. The pre-application submission was presented to the Test Valley Design Review Panel on the 7th March 2023. TVBC refer applications to the Panel as a mechanism for seeking expert design advice.

‘The Design Review Panel is comprised of local architects who volunteer their time to the Council. The meetings are intended to provide specialist design advice to assist planning officers in their assessment, and determination of a development proposal. Written comments from the Design Review Panel will be regarded as a consultation response in relation to a particular development proposal and, where they relate to a current planning application, will be publicly available.’ ref TVBC web site. 01.03.2023.

39. In its response the Panel highlighted a number of concerns. The response itself has not been published but a summary is set out in the appellant’s Statement of Community Involvement June 2023, ref page 5. The Panel highlighted its concerns regarding the evolution of the design.

‘The proposed scale is much greater in places than is deemed suitable for either the site or the street. The site is already positioned at a higher level than the properties on Palmerston Street and consideration should be given to this to avoid a sense of overbearing on the existing street scene.

A more detailed analysis of the site and the contextual arrangement is required to fully infer the design decisions behind the current proposals. The proposed scheme unfortunately has the appearance of a fully completed scheme rather than one that is at pre-app stage, ready for discussion and further design development. Amending the building typology from a u-shaped arrangement with regular room sizes either side of a central corridor, to a plan form that is better suited to the site and adjacent streets, with greater individuality and interest, will assist in creating a more successful and sensitive proposal for this site.’

40. The RDS view is that the proposed scheme is in conflict with Policy E1 with particular reference to criteria a) b) and d).

a) should integrate, respect and complement the character of the area in which the development is located in terms of layout, appearance, scale, materials and building styles.

41. The proposed development due to its position, form, mass, height and limited variation in the elevations, would result in a very different building to the existing EMH. It would be highly visible and dominant when compared with its immediate surroundings. The proposed building would be located closer to the highway, Palmerston Street and Broadwater Road. It would compete with, rather than complement the adjoining buildings, particularly the small scale listed buildings opposite on Palmerston Street and the Manor House.

42. The importance of the site is such that it deserves a development of high quality in terms of its design such that it respects and complements the character of the area. The proposed building is formulaic and has not been informed by a clear understanding and appreciation of its location. The generic block of apartments is out of scale with regard to the listed buildings close by and bears no relationship to the

local character and visual attractiveness of the location. The repetitive fenestration fails to recognise the uniqueness that a variety of window sizes normally express.

43. The scheme does not satisfy the policy criteria.

b) should not detract from the dominance of, or interrupt important views of, key landmark buildings or features;

44. It is accepted by the appellants that the site occupies an important location in the townscape.

'The site is visible on the approach into Romsey's historic core on the west side of Palmerston Street and forms part of the gateway experience to/from the conservation area' ref paragraph 4.27 page 19 of the Heritage Statement.

45. The proposed development would impose on the existing street scene when viewed from the properties on the opposite side of Palmerston Street, from Broadwater Road, the view looking south along Palmerston Street and from the A3090 Romsey By-pass. That impact can be compared with that of the existing EMH in the photos on pages 16-26 of the Heritage Statement.

46. The site is at a higher level in relation to Palmerston Street and the A3090, approximately 1.6 metres. The impact of the site levels is significant, particularly when viewed from the listed buildings on the east side of Palmerston Street, looking south toward the site from within Palmerston Street and from the entrance to the listed Manor House on the junction of Palmerston Street and Broadwater Road. The combination of the difference in site levels and the height of the proposed building at 10.4 metres results in an overly dominant building. This can be clearly seen on the revised elevation drawings. Palmerston Street ref drwg 10123RS-PAO6-B, Broadwater Road ref drwg 10123RS-PAO7-B and the A3090 By-Pass ref drwg 10123RS-PAO8-B. The photographs on page 17 of the Design and Access Statement are also informative in terms of an appreciation of the impact the site levels.

c) makes efficient use of the land whilst respecting the character of the surrounding area and neighbouring uses.

47. The scheme imposes a level of development which does not respect the character of the surrounding area and neighbouring uses. The unattractive elevations to the internal courtyard, insignificant main entrance and a lack of adequate amenity space demonstrates that the building is too large and bulky for the site.

48. The RDS is not alone in raising concerns regarding the design of the scheme and its impact on the townscape. The Test Valley Design Review Panel was consulted on the original submitted scheme, see its comments on 7th August 2023, reproduced as Appendix One, and was highly critical. Its comments were reported to the SAPC meeting of the 12th March 2024. It was not consulted on the revised plans.

South of Romsey Town Centre Initiative

49. The appellants have referenced TVBC's South of Romsey Town Centre Initiative in its planning submission as part of its justification its proposals. The South of Romsey Town Centre Masterplan was adopted by the Council in September 2020 to guide future decisions and inform the review of the local plan. It has no formal planning status i.e. it is not a Supplementary Planning Document. The relevance of the Masterplan to the appeal is of limited, if any, significance. The document itself represents no more than some initial concepts and ideas published for public consultation by TVBC.

50. The relevance of the masterplan to the appeal is that it identifies the potential to relocate the existing Aldi store to the Crosfield Hall site, the Hall would be relocated elsewhere and to place a decked car park on the current Aldi car park. The appellant it is assumed would like its proposals to be considered in the context of these proposals.

51. The current position as understood by the RDS and based on advice provided by TVBC officers at a public event on the 18th November 2023 is that Aldi have no plans to relocate across the road as the site is too small. As the move is fundamental to key proposals in the Masterplan there is a serious question mark over the relevance of it in respect of this appeal. It is also the case that TVBC has yet to consider a formal proposal to relocate the Crosfield Hall and there is no commitment in its capital programme for the project.

52. The RDS has been advised recently by officers of TVBC that it is commissioning consultants to advise on retail and parking issues to inform its thinking on the Masterplan and future of the bus station and its potential redevelopment.

53. Notwithstanding the planning status of the masterplan the site is located as an important gateway to Romsey. In the knowledge of the adjacent Crosfield Hall forming a key element of TVBC's potential development of a 'South of Town Centre' plan we feel that the Edwina Mountbatten site should be part of a comprehensive strategy for this important gateway.

Community Engagement

54. The NPPF places importance on the involvement of the community in the design process. The involvement of the community in this proposal has been limited to a virtual on-line consultation from the 8th-14th May 2023 which only generated 14 responses. Impact on the character of the area was reported in the Design and Access Statement as one of the issues raised.

55. It is clear that where the community has been involved via a virtual consultation or via the Design Panel as local experts it has had little impact. The design has not fundamentally changed from the pre-application scheme submitted to TVBC in January 2023 re paragraph 3.6 on page 30.

56. It is the view of the RDS that there has not been proactive and effective engagement with the community as advised in paragraphs 131 and 137 of the NPPF.

Impact of the Development on Designated Heritage Assets

Policy E9 Heritage

Romsey Conservation Area

57. The site is located adjoining the Romsey Conservation Area. The boundary includes the listed Manor House opposite and all of Palmerston Street from its junction with The Hundred south to the A3090 Romsey Bypass. It is accepted by the appellant that the site is within the setting of the Romsey Conservation Area ref paragraph 3.5.4 page 12 paragraph and 4.2.8 page 20 of the Heritage Statement. Palmerston Street itself is identified as an important historic approach to the town centre ref para 4.2.8.

58. The RDS does not agree with the conclusion in the Heritage Statement that the site does not contribute to the setting of the Conservation Area ref paragraph 4.2.8. In arriving at that conclusion, the authors rely upon the conclusion of the Romsey Conservation Area Boundary Amendment Report. The exclusion of the site was justified on the basis of the assessment of the existing building having no historic value and that it did not reflect the historic character of the area, see paragraph 7 above.

59. It is of significance that the Amendment Report found that the 'larger footprint' of the Edwina Mountbatten Home did 'not reflect the historic character of the area'. The building in comparison with the proposed development is very modest in scale and its low-rise form means that in views of the site as set out in the Heritage Statement pages 16-26 it is subservient to the listed buildings.

60. The overdevelopment of the Edwina Mountbatten House site fails to recognise not only the importance of this 'gateway' to Romsey but also its context adjacent to the setting of the Conservation Area.

61. The RDS view is that the impact of the development would result in harm to the Conservation Area. Having regard to the advice in the NPPF and the Planning Practice Guidance on the Historic Environment 2019 it is considered that harm would **be less than** substantial.

Listed Buildings

62. The proposed development given its form scale and height along with the proposed approach to the elevations is completely out of character with the listed buildings within whose setting it is located.

63. The combination of the site levels and the design approach will result in a building which will become the dominant feature in Palmerston Street and to the detriment of the designated heritage assets in particular nos 30-48 Palmerston Street. It will also be the dominant building at the junction of Palmerston Street and Broadwater Road, at present a function performed by the Manor House.

64. The setting of a heritage asset is defined in the NPPF as the surroundings in which it is experienced. The listed buildings when viewed from the north, and south are located on a historic street and with little modern development to interrupt their setting.

The proposed building would dominate the Street scene, particularly at the junction with Broadwater Road. The RDS view is that there would be harm to the setting of the listed buildings in Palmerston Street and that harm would be less than substantial.

65.The RDS considers that there would also be harm to the setting of Red Lodge at the entrance to the registered park and garden. The A3090 provides a landscape setting where existing buildings are set back from the highway with the Tadburn Lake in between. The proposed building will interrupt and have an adverse impact on the character and setting of the listed buildings. The proposed building would be the dominant feature at the junction of Palmerston Street, the A3090 and the entrance to Broadlands.

66.The RDS considers that harm to the setting of listed building and entrance to Broadlands would be less than substantial.

Policy LHW4: Amenity

67.In planning terms, amenity can refer to the quality or character of an area and elements that contribute to the overall enjoyment of an area. The scale, mass and height of the proposed building would have a significant adverse impact on the amenity of residents of Palmerston Street.

68.The existing private amenity space is approximately 700sqm which compares with approx. 325sqm within the proposed scheme. The significant reduction in green space is an outcome of too much development being proposed for the site.

Do the Proposed Benefits of the Scheme Outweigh the Harm?

69.There is a clear process, as set out in the local plan and NPPF that in considering proposals which affect designated heritage assets the harm identified should be considered against the benefits of the scheme. Any harm to a designated heritage asset requires clear and convincing justification.

70.The benefits arising from the scheme are set out in various documents submitted by the appellant namely: The Design and Access Statement June 2023, paragraph 1.4 page 6, the Planning Statement June 2023 paragraph 6.6 page 37 and Appendix B in the original submission to TVBC and in the Statement of Case. There are inconsistencies with regard to scale of impact eg: the economic impact on the town centre £347k or £364k, the 'savings' to the NHS of £164k or 214k, number of supply chain jobs 87 or 107, the number of homes released 90 or 94. For the purposes of assessing the scale of the benefit the highest figure in each case has been used.

71. It is not clear from the appellant's submissions whether any account has been taken of the benefits which existed with EMH before it closed. No reference can be found in the documentation and it is therefore reasonable to highlight that the benefits arising from the 47 apartments as not representing the net impact of the proposed development.

72. Setting to one side the lack of consistency in the scale of impact and no assessment of the net impact, the RDS has reviewed the benefits as highlighted by the appellants in the Statement of Case paragraph 5.19 set out below:

- Development of a vacant previously developed land;
- Development would be of land in a sustainable location
- Making optimum use of a previously developed site
- The delivery of much needed specialist housing for older people
- Development would provide 47 market dwellings and would contribute to the delivery of housing in a district with an identified under supply of dwellings.
- Releasing under-occupied housing stock
- Economic benefits through job creation through construction and operational phases, and through residents spending locally
- Social benefits of specialised accommodation for older persons
- Environmental benefits.

73. In assessing the benefits of the scheme, as identified by the appellant, the RDS has taken as its starting point the impact on designated heritage assets. The decision-maker is required to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting ref Section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. It is the RDS's understanding that it is the case that considerable weight should be given the desirability objective.

74. Turning to the scale and impact of any benefit claimed by the appellants, the assessment should consider the context of the benefit and its scale to the local area and potentially more widely. The appellants have raised a series of estimates of the scale of benefit in terms of construction, economic output, employment, residents' expenditure on local shops, the housing market and health service in isolation. This does not assist the decision-maker in determining what weight to attribute to such benefits.

Development of a vacant previously developed land; Making optimum use of a previously developed site Development would be of land in a sustainable location.

75. The benefit arising from the redevelopment of the site close to the centre of Romsey is not exclusive to the proposed scheme. The site is within the settlement policy boundary for Romsey where the principle of development is accepted. It is reasonable to assume that a number of other forms of development, residential or commercial would result in a similar outcome i.e. the use of a site in a sustainable location.

The delivery of much needed specialist housing for older people. Development would provide 47 market dwellings and would contribute to the delivery of housing in a district with an identified under supply of dwellings.

76. The supply of housing land does not appear to be an issue ref the Statement of Case submitted by the appellant ref para 5.3. TVBC can demonstrate that it has over

7 years supply. However, the appellant has reserved its position recognising that the scale of housing land supply can change.

77. The appellant's case is predicated on what it considers is a significant contribution to the supply of housing and specialist housing need.

78. With regard to the need for housing TVBC can demonstrate that it has a 7.01 years supply within the Southern Test Valley Housing Area (STV) as identified in the adopted Local Plan, as at April 2023 the most recent published assessment, ref Housing Implementation Strategy February 2024.

79. The proposed units would make a very modest contribution to the overall housing supply for the STV housing area. The latest published supply includes the appeal site under the category of identified capacity as it is on the brownfield register. It represents 3% of the current five-year supply of 1317 dwellings. This is a net gain of 22 units.

80. The provision of accommodation for older people is promoted by the appellants as a major benefit. The planning application was supported by an assessment of need undertaken by the Three Dragons consultancy, May 2023. The report used two different models, the Retirement Housing Group model (RHG) and the Contact Consulting model (CC) to demonstrate a borough-wide need and a need relating to Romsey.

81. The Borough comprises two housing market areas which are defined in the current adopted local plan and previous local plans. The Three Dragons report analyses the demand for retirement housing at both the Borough-wide level and for the Romsey area. It is considered that the issue of demand should focus on the figures in the report for the Romsey area which is part of the STV housing area.

82. There is no standard methodology for estimating the need for older persons accommodation and the output of any modelling exercise needs to be treated with some caution as highlighted by the appellant's consultants and the consultants TVBC commissioned to assess housing requirements for the new local plan.

'Caution is advised in considering data at local level as it may not take into consideration factors unknown to the researchers. This may affect older residents' decisions and behaviour in relation to moving home'. ref paragraph 2.21. Three Dragons Report.

83. JG Consulting were commissioned by TVBC to prepare a Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA). They advised:

'The need for specialist housing for older persons is typically modelled by applying prevalence rates to current and projected population changes and considering the level of existing supply. There is no standard methodology for assessing the housing and care needs of older people. The current and future demand for elderly care is influenced by a host of factors including the balance between demand and supply in any given area and social, political, regulatory and financial issues. Additionally, the extent to which new homes are built to accessible and adaptable standards may over time have an impact on specialist demand (given that older people often want to

remain at home rather than move to care) – this will need to be monitored.’ Para 7.26 SHMA 2022.

84.The Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) Housing for Older and Disabled People recognises that older people may not want of need to move into specialist accommodation.

‘Many older people may not want or need specialist accommodation or care and may wish to stay or move to general housing that is already suitable, such as bungalows, or homes which can be adapted to meet a change in their needs. Plan-makers will therefore need to identify the role that general housing may play as part of their assessment.’ - ref Paragraph: 012 Reference ID: 63-012-20190626. Revision date: 26 June 2019.

85.Looking to the future through Building Regulations, local plan policies and discretionary grants from local authorities, it is likely that the supply of homes which will be capable of enabling people to stay in their homes for longer will increase. It is not clear the extent to which the models used to project the future demand for specialist accommodation take these factors into account.

86.It is in that context that the findings of The Three Dragons report should be viewed. Figure 3.4 of the report identifies the area for which the modelling was undertaken to provide an estimate of demand for the Romsey area. A supply of 368 units for retirement living accommodation comparable with that proposed was identified as at March 2023.

87.The basis for the supply figure is found in Annex B of the Three Dragons Report. It includes two tables. The Age Exclusive Housing table supply figure for leasehold and freehold and area is 153 units. The Retirement Housing table, when one excludes the sites outside of the Romsey area supply figure is 215. This is where the total supply figure of 368 is derived.

88.The RHG modelled a demand for 553 units and the CC modelling a demand for 691 units. Taking account of the current supply the balance of demand is for 185 applying the RHG model and 323 applying the CC model. ref paragraph 2.20 and Table 2.7, based on information at March 2023.

89.However, it would appear that the supply of retirement living accommodation has been significantly under-estimated. Three sites; Ampfield Meadows (130 units), Audley Stanbridge Earls (155 units) and Grove Place (115 units) have been included within the supply of extra care and enhanced sheltered housing units. A total of 400 units.

90.It is the RDS’s understanding that these developments are marketed as retirement living homes whilst offering offer a range of options dependent upon the requirements of prospective residents. They are not restricted to these who need care.

91.The supply identified in the Three Dragons Report should be reviewed to take account of these sites. When that exercise is done based on the appellant’s figures there is a surplus ranging from 77-215 units dependent upon which model is used.

Contribution towards affordable housing

92. The appellant proposed an initial contribution of £113,000 towards affordable housing provision which was revised to £314,000 following a review of the viability of the scheme commissioned by TVBC. The appellant's statement of case states that:

'The Appellant as a commercial expediency agreed to the sum of £314,000 but reserved its position should planning permission not be forthcoming from the local authority. Accordingly, the level of affordable housing contribution is currently in dispute between the parties at this appeal. 5.13'.

93. It is not known how the financial contribution would be used by TVBC, to deliver affordable housing elsewhere in the area. The current need for affordable rented accommodation in the Romsey area is 147 units per annum, ref Figure 5.16 page 85 of the SHMA 2022. The £314,000 would enable the purchase of a single three-bed semi-detached house in Romsey as an example of the impact of the contribution.

94. The affordable, given the scale of need identified housing contribution is considered to be of limited benefit.

95. TVBC's housing policies would require any residential scheme to contribute to meeting the need for affordable housing in the area, therefore any benefit arising from the appealed scheme should be seen in that context alongside the scale of the contribution.

Releasing under-occupied housing stock

96. It is claimed that the proposed scheme would have a positive impact on the housing market as it would free up 94 units initiated by the residents of the scheme moving home, and that the scheme would help free up under-occupied houses. It is not clear how the figure has been arrived at or where they are located in relation to the local housing market. It is assumed that it is based on a piece of national research Housing Markets and Independence in Old Age, May 2011 which used data from 2007-2010.

97. The impact on the local housing market of other potential residential schemes for the site may have a similar impact in terms of adding to the overall housing stock, and facilitating moves within it so any potential benefit is not exclusive to this scheme.

98. The RDS consider that the under occupation of homes should not necessarily be seen as a negative feature of the housing market. There will be many reasons why homes are under-occupied when the number of occupants is compared with the size of the dwelling such as number of bedrooms. The home may be a long-standing family home in which the residents have invested in both financially and emotionally and do not wish to leave. The 'spare' bedrooms may well enable regular visits by family and friends. The house may be capable of adaptation to meet future needs. Under occupation is a feature of the wider housing market and is not solely applicable to the older population.

Economic benefits through job creation through construction and operational phases, and through residents spending locally

99. The application was supported by information set out in the Planning Statement including a graphic produced by Lichfields ref Appendix B and Design and Access Statement setting out the economic impact included in the Planning Statement. There are inconsistencies in the figures set out. For the purposes of assessing the benefits the higher figures have been used.

100. The proposed economic benefits are not unique to the proposed scheme as different forms of development would generate value. In assessing the scale of benefit, it is important to understand the nature and level of that benefit and the effect on the economy. Ref paragraph 64 *Bewley Homes v SSLUHC and Waverley BC*. 2024 EWHC 116 (Admin) 16.5.24.

101. The benefits of the construction of the proposed development are estimated by the appellant as £8.5m build value, 88 construction jobs for an 18-month period and 107 supply chain jobs, assumed to be for a similar period.

102. Post construction the development is projected to provide 4 direct jobs and 9 supported jobs. This is a very modest addition to the supply of jobs when compared with the 67,700 people in employment in the Borough 2023 ref ONS data. It is not clear how the figure has been arrived at or where they are located. The labour market in Test Valley is characterised by a high level of economic activity. At December 2023 86% of the working-age population was active which compares with 78% nationally. The unemployment rate in Test Valley at December 2023 was 2.1% ref Labour Market Profile Test Valley ONS.

103. In terms of Gross Value Added (GVA), it is proposed that the construction process would add £16.1m to economic output and £135,000 per annum. The context for the annual contribution is the GVA for the Borough which was estimated at £3.4 billion ref Test Valley Economic Assessment and Forecasts, Oxford Economics April 2023.

104. The extent to which the investment identified would go directly to the local economy would be dependent upon the procurement process and the involvement of local companies. In any event the impact would be temporary.

105. The appellants project an additional £364,000 of expenditure on local services and shops by residents of the development taking into account the location of their previous homes. They advise that more than half of the residents would come from locations within five miles of the site, ref paragraph 5.54 of the Planning Statement. That would broadly correspond with the primary catchment area for Romsey Town Centre. ref Andover and Romsey Retail Capacity and Leisure Study, Carter Jonas 2018 commissioned by TVBC.

106. Romsey Town Centre is performing well compared with national trends. The percentage of vacant units was 4% as recorded in the TVBC Authority Monitoring Report 2022/23. This compares with 14% nationally ref Savills Spotlight on Shopping Centre and High Street Q1 2024. It is assumed but not known that the appellants have discounted the expenditure of those residents who previously lived within five miles in

arriving at their estimate. The estimated expenditure retained in the Town Centre in 2021 was £124.5m for convenience and comparison expenditure, ref Appendix Two and Three of the Study. The figure of £364,000pa represents 0.29% increase.

107. The impact on the local economy and that of the Town Centre in terms of increase in expenditure is considered to be extremely small.

Social benefits of specialised accommodation for older persons

108. The appellant's case relies heavily on the benefits that the form of accommodation they provide has in terms of health and well-being. It is not clear how the financial saving has been calculated and the extent to which the potential for an increase in potential to stay at home for longer has been taken into account.

109. The appellant's estimate that the NHS would benefit in savings of £214,000pa arising from the residents moving into the proposed development. This compares with a Southern Health NHS Foundation Trust budget of £456m for the year 2022/23.

Environmental benefits

110. The Planning Statement, ref paragraphs 5.173-5.174 highlights the environmental benefits of the scheme as, a highly sustainable location, energy efficient building and provision of EV charging points.

111. The RDS considers that these features of the scheme are not unique to it and that they are extremely modest in scale.

Balancing Act

112. The proposed development is located within the setting of designated heritage assets. The RDS considers that for the reasons set out in this submission there would be harm to those designated assets. Any harm needs clear and convincing justification ref paragraph 206 of the NPPF.

113. The RDS consider that there is harm to the setting of designated heritage assets which should be given considerable weight. That harm is considered to be less than substantial and is to be weighed against the public benefits.

114. The appellant's case regarding the benefits of the proposed scheme are not set in a local context to enable the decision maker to come to an informed judgement. They are not based on a local assessment but rely on broad based studies using (we assume) national data.

When the local context is taken into account the RDS considers that the benefits are limited and do not overcome the harm:

- Development of a vacant previously developed land: modest weight
- Development would be of land in a sustainable location: modest weight
- Making optimum use of a previously developed site: modest weight
- The delivery of much needed specialist housing for older people: modest weight
- Development would provide 47 market dwellings and would contribute to the delivery of housing in a district with an identified under supply of dwellings: modest weight
- Releasing under-occupied housing stock: modest weight
- Economic benefits through job creation through construction and operational phases, and through residents spending locally: modest weight
- Social benefits of specialised accommodation for older persons: modest weight
- Environmental benefits: modest weight

Conclusion

115. The proposal is contrary to the development plan policies E1, E9 and LHW4. The development is out of character in the area. The proposed development due to its position, form, mass height and limited variation in the elevations, would result in a very different building to the existing one. The high visibility and dominance within its immediate surroundings would compete with, rather than complement adjoining buildings, particularly the listed buildings opposite on Palmerston Street and the Manor House.

116. It will result in harm to the Romsey Conservation Area and the listed buildings close by for which a clear and convincing case has not been made.

117. The public benefits such as they are do not justify the proposed development and do not outweigh the harm to the setting of designated heritage assets.

118. We respectfully request the Inspector to dismiss the appeal.

Appendix One: Text of Design Review Panel Response 7th August 2023

EDWINA MOUNTBATTEN HOUSE, ROMSEY – 23/01700/FULLS

CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND:

This is a difficult site in a challenging location – ‘a gateway into the town’. The previous Panel who reviewed the proposal in March expressed major concerns and concluded that the scheme’s objective – (i.e. the creation of strong, detailed high quality and architecturally sympathetically frontages etc.)‘has not been achieved....’ That Panel made two critical suggestions: - Firstly, that..... ‘a more detailed analysis of the site and the contextual arrangement is required to fully infer the design decisions behind the current proposals’. Secondly, that..... ‘amending the building typology from a ‘U’-shaped arrangement with regular room sizes either side of a central corridor to a plan-form that is better suited to the site and adjacent streets, will assist in creating a more successful and sensitive proposal’.

This Panel is therefore disappointed that this full submission has not taken on board these suggestions and has only made minor alterations to the original design. The concerns about the detrimental impact of the proposed design in terms of its scale and ‘monolithic’ form upon the neighbouring historic buildings and the setting of the conservation area still remain. The Panel notes some particular areas of concern as follows: -

- The size and bulk of the proposal, particularly on the Palmerston Street frontage and both corners are overbearing, particularly that the site is on raised ground (no proper sections have been provided to demonstrate the relationship). Does the scheme have to present a frontage to Palmerton Street, as this is where much of the problems of scale stem from?
- The single-aspect units facing Palmerston Street and the narrow strip of front gardens seems to be an unsatisfactory arrangement.
- If the applicant is going to break down the massing by reference to the surrounding context then that needs to follow through thoroughly and not to compromise it just to fit the number of units presented in the scheme (there may be other areas that can accommodate these additional units better) and in the correct proportions.
- The design style is not well proportioned and does not represent a correct interpretation of historic features and details. For example, all the windows are the same size and configuration regardless of the position or floor level. The design of the doors facing Palmerston Street are more akin to a rear garden patio door than a front door facing a street. If chimneys are going to be included, they should be set in a logical position (not above windows) along the ridgeline or on the gable end.
- The roof forms also are too uniform and the number and mix of materials is not appropriate to the context or the materials specified.
- The proposal is out of scale with the locality. Mention was made of the ‘Churchill product’ and it maybe that the standard product’ is not compatible with this site? Part of the problem also may be the number of units proposed for a site, that demands a bespoke solution that respects the context and character of the sit

3. The Panel expressed some frustration in yet another example of a scheme being presented at the pre-application stage and then being re-submitted as an application thus effectively disregarding earlier Panel advice. This negates the advantage of the process which allows discourse and giving guidance towards the best possible options. The Panel considers that the scheme requires a complete re- think.

A WAY FORWARD:

4. Any design must respond to the site and context as given. The design needs to break away from the rigidity of the present layout. The blocks would be better to appear separate. Consider the surrounding historic urban grain. The Palmerston Street frontage should be low in scale to relate to the row cottages opposite and the difference in level between the opposite sides of the street. The block along the south boundary could be three storeys and extended at the west end. Romsey is largely a settlement built on brick and a limit on the number of materials used could help bring some sense of design cohesiveness.

- To conclude, the Panel re-emphasises that this is an important site on one of the gateways into the town, which demands a quality piece of architecture, which must respond to the constraints of the setting and display correct proportions and detailing whatever the design approach. The Panel considers that the present scheme for this site falls short and would be detrimental to the setting of the conservation area. The Panel feels that all the analysis done on the site and the area has only served to support the original plan for the development, without the brief being tested against the setting. The scheme now needs to be re-considered. Any new approach should show the critical cross-sections through the site and the surrounding streets in order to allow for accurate assessment of any proposed form and scale. The Panel would encourage that an alternative sketch design is put forward by the applicant for discussion with the LPA and the Panel, so that the right solution may be found for this critical site.

Michael Ricketts, Joint Chairman on behalf of the Panel