

**ROMSEY TOWN COUNCIL OBJECTION TO PLANNING APPLICATION 23/01700/FULLS AND
SUBSEQUENT APPEAL APP/C1760/W/24/3342514.**

Redevelopment for retirement living accommodation comprising 47 retirement apartments including communal facilities, access, car parking and landscaping Edwina Mountbatten House Broadwater Road Romsey Hampshire SO51 8GH.

Background

The proposed development is located on a site which is on the corner of the key entrance to Romsey with aspects facing the Romsey Bypass and Palmerston Street.

Palmerston Street is the only entrance to Romsey from the Romsey Bypass; therefore, it is an important gateway to the historic market town of Romsey. It is the entrance to Romsey that greets local residents and out-of-town shoppers and tourists visiting Romsey. The continued prosperity and vibrancy of Romsey depends on presenting a welcoming entrance.

The houses in Palmerston Street facing the proposed development are Grade II Listed Buildings. Houses 30 – 36 are listed as a group (ref 1232471) and houses 38 – 52 are listed as a group (ref 1237049).

The eastern side of Palmerston Street falls within the Romsey Town Conservation Area

South of the houses in Palmerston Street is an open area giving on to South Front and the old Fox Mill buildings. These also form part of the conservation area.

Beyond the site to the north on both sides of the road are further listed buildings including the 15th/16th century Manor House.

Thus, the entrance to Romsey is one characterised by an open area giving on to a set of heritage houses all built to a small scale.

The site of the proposed development is on higher ground than the houses on the eastern side of Palmerston Street (1.5m) so any development starts from a higher datum level. However, the existing building on the site (the now-closed Edwina Mountbatten House) has a relatively low profile, being single storey, which, despite the rising ground, does not appear significantly out of scale.

The Romsey Future project is currently developing detailed plans for the South of Town Centre area with a view to making better use of the land and to make it a more attractive first sight of Romsey. Ideally the proposed development site would have formed part of the relevant proposals as it is the main entrance site but this is not something to which the trustees of Edwina Mountbatten House or the proposed developers have contributed.

Romsey Town Council's opinion

Romsey Town Council has no objection in principle to the site being developed as retirement accommodation.

Romsey Town Council does, however, object to the proposed development for the following reasons:

- The development envisages three storeys of accommodation resulting in a building which is large, bulky and much more prominent than the existing Edwina Mountbatten House. This is demonstrated in the CGI views from the roundabout junction of the A27 and Palmerston Street. The problem is exacerbated by the proposed development being on higher ground.
- It is out of proportion to the small houses in Palmerston Street being three storeys. It would also overwhelm the feeling of open space afforded by the area in front of South Front. As such it would be out of character for the area and would not present a sympathetic and welcoming entrance to Romsey.
- The style of building largely reflects the developer's corporate style with the addition of some elements to provide a token reflection of the locality. A well-designed development could be either one that was fully reflective of the local vernacular of Palmerston Street or innovative in style but as it stands it is neither and does nothing to contribute positively to the appearance of the local street scene.
- Consequently, the current design is considered to be detrimental to the general conservation area and Romsey's heritage assets including the Manor House further along Palmerston Street.
- The size and bulk of the proposed development also would overwhelm the dwellings on Palmerston Street leading to a feeling of enclosure and overbearing to their detriment.
- The tree canopy which lines the banks of the Tadburn Stream along Romsey Bypass may well restrict light coming into the southern side of the building. Consequently, there may be pressure in the future to reduce or remove the trees to the detriment of the almost continuous tree-lined approach to Romsey from Middlebridge to Palmerston Street.

Romsey deserves better than this.

John Parker

Town Mayor of Romsey