



ROMSEY & DISTRICT SOCIETY

Romsey Inquiry

Appeal by Churchill Retirement Living Ltd

Edwina Mountbatten House, Broadwater Road, Romsey

SO51 8GH

Ref: APP/D1265/W/24/3337301

N.Beasley Dip Arch RIBA

Speaking on the impact of the character of the area

August 2024

Revised

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INTRODUCTION

Good morning,

I'm Neill Beasley, and I've lived in Romsey for fifty two years. On behalf of the Romsey and District Society, I am here to speak at this appeal on design issues and the impact on the heritage of the area.

As well as having a feeling for the pulse of this important market town and its historic underpinnings, I'm a retired Architect with 50 years (practising) experience in the design of education, commercial, health and residential developments.

I was a founder member of the Romsey & District Society, established in 1974, a past Chairman of the Society (from X to Y), and have remained an active member of the Society's planning committee.

I have contributed to the Society in many ways, and appreciate the successful role the Society has achieved in the past, saving Romsey from inappropriate development

As a member of the TVBC Design Review Panel for several years, I was one of the architects that viewed the pre-app of the proposals which are the subject of this appeal.

Today I speak as an individual member of that panel.

I will speak briefly to emphasise the concerns of the Society supplementary to the comprehensive statement already submitted, starting with the location, setting and context

The appeal site is sandwiched between the Romsey Conservation Area and the Grade 2* Listed parkland landscape of Broadlands by Capability Brown, the Grade 1 Listed Palladian style Broadlands House designed by Henry Holland and Nesfields' gate House.

In other words, the site is bounded on three sides by these defined assets

Palmerston Street (formerly known as Park Street) was the primary route from Southampton to Romsey town centre that passed through the Broadlands estate.

In 1864 Lord Palmerston did a deal with the railways to divert the road to the east, filling in the old Andover canal to create the new Southampton road we see today.

Palmerston Street was then, and remains to this day, an important entrance to Romsey. Entering the street from the by-pass there is the delight of viewing the array of small scale period buildings. The diminutive scale and presence of the Edwina Mountbatten Home has little impact upon that important vista despite its elevated position on site..

In assessing the impact of the proposed however we need take into account the location, the context and setting. - that being the important gateway to the town, the street scene towards the Hundred, the Manor House that was once part of the appellants' site, and the virtually unchanged two and three storey houses in Palmerston Street set within the Conservation Area.

In my view the proposed development will have an adverse impact on these neighbouring listed buildings and the Conservation Area in general.

Its worth recalling that until its designation was removed in 2020 the appellant's site was within the Romsey Conservation Area. The reasons given for the justification to remove the Edwina Mountbatten Home from the Conservation Area were, and I quote,

" 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. "

The irony of that final sentence needs to be tested and scrutinised in the context of this appeal as the foot print of the proposed retirement home is 52% greater than the Edwina Mountbatten Home it replaces and nearly four times larger that the existing building and more than doubles in height.

It is the bulk of the proposed that appears alien in this location.

It fails to reflect the (burgage) 'grain' of Romsey that is espoused in the Urban Design Study proof of evidence.

Referring to

Policy E1

The Society's position is that the proposed development is contrary to Policy E1 of the Local Plan in terms of its design and impact on the area that results in harm to the Conservation Area and Listed Buildings

The policy is to seek high quality development that should integrate, respect and complement the character of the area AND should NOT interrupt important views.

The proposed development is overbearing in scale, disproportionate in height and mass, and seriously affects the domestic scale and setting of the Listed Buildings in Palmerston street and the Conservation area. The CGI images submitted by NPA Visuals (CD7.10.1) clearly illustrates the overpowering nature of the proposed development.

It will compete and dominate the immediate surroundings rather than complement the Listed buildings

The design therefore appears inappropriate for this prominent position in relation to the Listed buildings and the Conservation Area. It is a very ordinary, standard retirement home package that is not befitting this important corner site and likely to be visually intrusive .

The architectural language adopted by the proposed development is a dishonest form of facadism, immitating a collection of very ordinary building styles unworthy of such an important and prominent site.

The elevations are nothing more than a thin skin concealing a large deep plan block of flats, while purporting to replicate a street terrace on three sides !! It is presumptuous to suggest the proposal embraces the character of town.

In my day

If it doesn't look right, it probably isn't right.

The Society's position is that the proposed scheme, for the reasons set out in its submission, CD8.1 (ref paras 41-48) will have a detrimental impact on the surrounding area.

E9 Heritage

Evidence of the historical development of this market town can be seen and appreciated by wandering through its tightly developed street frontages and linear routes of a medieval street pattern beside the Grade1* listed Romsey Abbey

Together with a large number of Listed buildings, and non-designated heritage assets, the character of Romsey is expressed in a variety of crafted styles.

The significance of the listed buildings and designated heritage assets are derived from their individual architectural interest and historic association to the development of Romsey as a Market Town set within the Conservation Area.

Historic England in the Good Practice Advice Note on the Setting of Heritage Assets (CD4.12) provides guidance on the impact of development. The setting of a heritage asset is the surroundings in which it is experienced.

However, para 20 of the Advice Note says “where that experience is capable of being affected (in any way) by the proposed development then the development is said to affect the setting of the asset”.

In my opinion the proposed development will affect the setting, will harm the significance of the town’s heritage and will have an adverse impact on the neighbouring listed buildings.

In the proposals before us the development will become a dominant feature at the entrance to Romsey. It will over power the listed buildings in Palmerston Street (Nos. 34 to 52), and diminish the view of the Manor House.

The street scene dating from the late C18th-early C19th is currently experienced today as a visitor to Romsey as it would have been in the past .

The proposed development creates a very different context.

It is disappointing to read in the proofs of evidence that the design has been ‘informed’ since inception by professional analysis and design input which seemingly fails to address a true understanding of the right kind of development on this site.

END