



Response to application: 20/01529/FUL | Conversion of former nursing home into residential development of 28-unit House in Multiple Occupation | Fives Acres Nursing Home Simpson Milton Keynes MK6 3AD

Simpson & Ashland Parish Council objects to the proposed conversion of the Five Acres former nursing home into 28 residential units. In the view of the Parish Council the proposed development is inappropriate for the location and out of character with its surroundings. While the Parish Council is broadly pro-development and supported the previous application for 9 units, this application proposes a much higher density, poorer quality development which will have an adverse impact on the village¹. We request that the application be referred to Development Control Committee for determination and rejected on the following material planning grounds:

Non-compliance with Plan:MK Policy HN1

Policy HN1 requires that developments providing over 11 homes provide a mix of housing unit types. All the units created in this conversion are small, single-bed units. The previous permission granted for this site demonstrates the viability of converting this building into larger multi-bed residential units. A wider mix of unit sizes with a number of larger units replacing some of the smaller ones currently proposed would better fit Policy HN1 and would encourage a mix of tenants that would reduce the potential for the development becoming socially isolated from the existing Simpson village.

Policy HN1 also encourages higher density development in locations “with good accessibility to facilities, that are well served by public transport, and where it can be accommodated by existing or improved infrastructure.” Simpson village is not a location that meets any of these criteria. The public transport service is minimal, consisting of an hourly bus service (currently reduced to two hourly) with no evening or Sunday service, supported by MK Council subsidy that could be withdrawn in the future leaving the area with no public transport linkage. There are minimal shopping facilities in the area, the nearest large shopping centres being at MK1, Kingston, and in Bletchley. No improvements to public transport or road infrastructure are proposed as part of this development.

Parking Provision

The developers are proposing 21 parking spaces for 28 units, some of which may be occupied by more than one resident. As some are large enough for a double occupancy, the total number of residents could reach 36. This also includes visitor parking. The developers have indicated that car usage is low in their other properties when the Parish Council raised this issue. This appears to reflect a lack of understanding of the unique geography of Milton Keynes and Simpson in particular, which is heavily car-dependent and poorly served by public transport. It is also unlikely residents will be practically able to work from home in such small units.

There is no capacity on the surrounding road network for occupants of or visitors to this development to park on the road. The Parish Council is deeply concerned that residents and visitors will overcrowd the

¹ In a survey carried out for the production of a Simpson Vision in 2016. 65% of respondents said they would welcome new developments that offered affordable family accommodation or quality single occupancy.

surrounding streets (which are largely older properties with no off-road parking) and request that a planning condition be included on this application to ensure that a number of the units are maintained as car-free units.

Unclear compliance with Plan:MK Policy HN2

The applicant has not demonstrated that the application complies with Policy HN2's affordable housing requirements.

Social Impact

The Parish Council wishes to note that the population of Simpson, in particular the area to the north of the site, contains a large proportion of older residents. The introduction of 28 units into this environment presents a risk to both existing residents and the new tenants at Five Acres, as there is the possibility of increased episodes of antisocial behaviour. The application suggests that the accommodation might be suitable for more vulnerable young people but given the potential transitory nature of occupation at the site and the lack of any specialist support on site, the impact on these already vulnerable young people could be negative. This allied with minimal public transport and no ready access to facilities highlights that the proposed development is not fit for purpose. There is mention on the application of the appointment of an onsite caretaker but one person would not be able to provide the specialist support that residents might require.

The Parish Council again requests that a wider range of unit sizes be considered to reduce the overall number and provide a broader range of unit types and thereby a mix of tenants. Furthermore, the Parish Council ask that a planning condition be imposed to ensure adequate security precautions are put in place, including fencing around the site, a formally employed caretaker, and CCTV provision. Some of these have been indicated informally by the applicant, however when pressed for management details they were unable to provide sufficient detail of how the security arrangements would work, hence the need for a condition.

In a survey carried out for the production of the Simpson Vision in 2016, 65% of respondents said they would welcome new developments that offered affordable family or single occupant accommodation. This, together with the Parish Council's support of the previous 9-unit proposal, indicates that Simpson residents support new development in principle, but that the particular issues of this proposal make it impossible to support.

Other Considerations

The Parish Council is concerned about the safety implications of all 28 units being accessed (by car, bicycle and pedestrian traffic) through a single-track access road. Options for segregating pedestrian and vehicle access should be explored.

A Noise Report has been submitted by the applicant, some time after the other documents appeared on the planning portal. We assume that this report is now formally regarded as part of the submission. Regardless of internal soundproofing, the prospect of noise from open windows and social gatherings (including music, etc.) within the grounds is cause for great concern to neighbours, including the immediately adjacent St Thomas's Church and its churchyard.

The applicant advances a case that the 28 units will be attractive to 'young professionals', especially those new to Milton Keynes. The Parish Council questions the potential attractiveness of the proposed concentrated living environment in a post-Covid-19 environment.

The Parish Council notes that, in the past, residents have highlighted sewage issues from the nursing home, indicating that inadequate capacity has caused blockages in the past. The new development at the corner of Hanmer Road, known locally as Bowlers Bridge, is adding to the demand on the sewer system. We request that the case officer seek an assessment of the drainage and sewer capacity on the site.