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Demolition of existing building and erection of 7 supported apartments. Former Tram Shed and garden of Westbrook House, 150 Canterbury Road, Margate – TH/05/1263

A report by Head of Planning Applications Unit to Planning Applications Committee on 14 February 2006.

TH/05/1263 – Application by Kent County Council Social Services for the demolition of existing building and erection of new building to accommodate 7 supported apartments and communal facilities for those with mental health issues. Former Tram Shed and garden of Westbrook House, 150 Canterbury Road, Margate.

Recommendation: Permission be granted.

Local Members: Mr R. Burgess

Classification: Unrestricted

Site

1. The application site is located at 150 Canterbury Road (A28), Margate. A former tram shed and part of the rear gardens of Westbrook House form the area identified for redevelopment. The site extends to approximately 0.28 hectares and is bounded by a high brick wall and railway line to the north, Westbrook House to the west, Canterbury Road to the south, and residential development immediately to the east, see attached site plan.

Background

2. The former tram shed in question once comprised the western terminus of a tramway built and operated by the Isle of Thanet Electric Tramways & Lighting Company, which closed 1937. The building comprises of a double height brick built shed with a corrugated metal/asbestos roof. The tram shed is open to the south with a cobbled access onto Canterbury Road with the original tram tracks retained in-situ.
3. The former tram shed adjoins the Westbrook House site that has recently been partially redeveloped. This development work involved the demolition of the old Westbrook Day Hospital and the construction of a new two storey residential home providing care for elderly people.

Proposal

4. Kent County Council's Social Services Directorate has brought this application for outline planning permission forward and it falls to be determined by the County Planning Authority due to the Social Services involvement. The proposal is one of a number of supported apartments under consideration for a Private Finance Initiative (PFI) bid to improve the County Council's provision of appropriate accommodation for vulnerable people with mental health issues. Outline planning permission is being sought in order to facilitate the PFI process and it is envisaged that were the proposal afforded the benefit of planning approval full details of the final design, site arrangements, external appearance and landscaping would be submitted for approval at a later date.

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5. Outline planning permission is being sought for the erection of a new building and associated infrastructure to provide 7 one bedroom supported apartments and communal facilities. The proposal would require the demolition of a disused tram shed to the east of Westbrook House site. The facilities would be provided for people with mental health issues. Due to the outline nature of the application, details of the siting of the proposed development and means of access are considered within this proposal, with further details being reserved for future consideration.
6. The built development would create 7 supported apartments over two storeys. The siting of the building is proposed to the rear of Westbrook House and residential properties at numbers 142, 144 and 146 Canterbury Road.
7. The access arrangements proposed for the site would link the development into the flow of traffic using the existing Westbrook House entrance and exit on to Canterbury Road. The existing access from the tram shed onto Canterbury Road would be closed. The new access road layout proposes a single lane entrance and exit route either side of Westbrook House electrical substation, 5 car parking spaces, and a turning circle and drop off point adjacent to the proposed building.
8. The applicant states that the proposed development would accommodate 7 residents and 5 part time members of staff. The staff would visit the site on a daily basis, with one member of staff to be present at any one time.
9. The pedestrian access arrangements would be via the existing footpath network at Westbrook House, with minor modification to reflect the proposed road layout and the building access. The layout is proposed to meet with the requirements of the Disabled Discrimination Act.
10. Whilst design and external appearance are not to be considered now, the applicant has provided some general guidance on the basic design of the proposed building. The applicant states that the orientation and design of the building would allow views over the gardens of Westbrook House and the railway lines. Direct views over neighbouring properties would be obscured through the use of translucent glazing or high level windows with new planting proposed along the boundaries with 142, 144 and 146 Canterbury Road. The design and materials to be used are proposed to reflect the details of Westbrook House, including a similar butterfly roof.

Additional Information provided by the Applicant

Access and Landscaping

11. During the processing of the application, the car parking arrangements proposed on the site have been amended, reducing the number of spaces to reduce the impact and increase the space available for landscaping between the bays, and along the boundary. Confirmation has also been provided that a brick wall would be retained/built along the boundary line with the adjoining residential properties to 1.6m in height, with additional planting provided to form a natural screen.

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Heritage

12. As a result of enquires about the possibility of retaining the tram shed as part of the proposed development the applicant provided additional comment in support of the proposal to demolish the building.
13. The applicant states that, ‘ the building is not an exemplar of its type, and not considered of special architectural merit by English Heritage. Following consultation with Kent Highways, it is clear that the re-use of the existing tram access onto Canterbury Road for a new car access would be opposed. The location of the tram shed makes vehicle access through the open end of it not up to current highway standards, and would therefore require a vehicle passage through the side wall, affecting structural integrity. The retention of the tram shed could create dangers through people being not clearly visible in the shadows, and would therefore require around the clock lighting.’
14. The applicant has confirmed that the design of the scheme would reflect the past uses of the site through the retention of the cobbled access and tram tracks, alongside the provision of a alternate surface material (for example cobbles) to mark the location of the external walls of the tram shed at the site.

Contamination

15. Further to the Environment Agency’s recommendation a Ground Conditions Report has been provided for the site.

Residents

16. In response to concerns about the mental health issues that would be catered for at the site, the applicant has confirmed that, ‘people who would be offered tenancies will be people who have suffered from mental health problems and are not well enough to live independently in the community. They would be supported by the local health and social services professionals, who will give support whenever required.’

Development Plan Policies

17. The Development Plan Policies summarised below are relevant to consideration of the application.

(i) The adopted Kent Structure Plan

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| Policy S1 | Seeks sustainable forms of development. |
| Policy S2 | Seeks to conserve and enhance the quality of Kent’s environment. |
| Policy S9 | Has regard for the need for community facilities and services, including education. |
| Policy ENV15 | New development should be well designed and respect its setting. |

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Policy ENV16 Seeks to make best use of land in built up areas balancing this against the objectives of maintaining and improving urban environmental quality, including density control, protecting tree cover and safeguarding any private space which contributes to the character and amenity of an area.

Policy ENV18 Seeks to protect and conserve important archaeological remains.

Policy T17 Development will normally be required to provide for vehicle parking on site in accordance with Kent County Council's Vehicle Parking Standards.

(ii) The Deposit Kent & Medway Structure Plan (2003):

Policy SP1 Seeks to protect and enhance the environment and achieve a sustainable pattern and form of development.

Policy QL1 Development should be well designed and respect its setting.

Policy QL8 Seeks to protect and preserve important archaeological remains.

Policy QL12 Seeks to protect existing community facilities and provide local services in residential areas, particularly where services are deficient.

Policy TP2 Development sites should be well served by public transport, walking and cycling.

Policy TP19 Development proposals must comply with the adopted vehicle parking policies and standards.

(iii) Isle of Thanet Local Plan (1998)

Policy H1 Requires that new residential development will be granted only on sites allocated for such purposes or on other sites where there is no conflict with Structure Plan or other Local Plan policies.

Policy CB1 Seeks to ensure that all development is of a high standard of design, respects the local character and avoids loss of open space, vegetation and features which contribute to the local environment.

Policy TR8 Requires development to provide car parking, where appropriate access by service vehicles in accordance with Kent County Council's vehicle parking standards.

Policy CF1 Supports proposals for new community facilities provided they are not contrary to other Local Plan policies.

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(iv) Thanet Local Plan: Revised Deposit Draft (2003):

- Policy H1 Requires that new residential development will be granted only on sites allocated for such purposes or on other sites where there is no conflict with Structure Plan or other Local Plan policies.
- Policy HNP3 Requires residential development at windfall sites to be assessed against criteria including, location and accessibility in relation to jobs and services by modes of travel other than by car, capacity of existing infrastructure, and physical and environmental constraints on development.
- Policy TR17 Requires development to provide car parking, where appropriate access by service vehicles in accordance with Kent County Council's vehicle parking standards.
- Policy D1 Requires that all new development provide a high standard of design, layout and materials and take into account the principles of sustainable design, respect local character, avoid the loss of amenity
- Policy D3 Seeks landscaping proposals for any new development to enhance the development site in its setting and retain as many of the existing trees, hedges and other habitat features as possible.
- Policy HE13 Seeks satisfactory archaeological investigation to preserve, protect and record archaeological resources.
- Policy CF1 Supports proposals for new community facilities provided they are not contrary to other Local Plan policies.

Consultations

18. **Thanet District Council** raises no objection to the proposals. The Local Planning Authority comments as follows:

“Concern is raised at the location of the proposal in relation to nearby houses. Whilst it is acknowledged that the site lies in close proximity to the Westbrook House development, which may allow additional support for these units, it is also noted that the proposal would be close to residential properties, and, from the plans submitted, may overlook these properties by virtue of its locality.

Concern is expressed at the location of the car parking area shown within the plans. Again, this would be in close proximity to a residential property, and would be likely to have a severe impact upon the amenities that the occupiers currently enjoy.

Concern is also raised at the loss of a number of mature trees within the site.

The loss of the tram shed is considered to be to the detriment of the character of the area, and would be the loss of an important local historical feature. Whilst it is acknowledged that the shed is not at present Listed, nor lies within a Conservation Area,

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it is felt that the structure has local historic importance, and as such is worthy of preservation. As such, an application has been made to have the building Listed.”

English Heritage: the building is not of special architectural or historic interest and should not be Listed. The reasons are:

“This former tram depot was built under the Light Railway Act by the Isle of Thanet Electric Tramways and Lighting Company in about 1900 and is possibly the last remaining structure from the Thanet system.

Architecturally the building is plain and utilitarian in design with a plain stock brick structure and a renewed gabled corrugated asbestos roof. The evidence of the tram lines and the long narrow forms of the building helps identify its original function and it is therefore of interest in its local setting. However, buildings of this type and date require clear levels of architectural and historic interest and this is not a rare or particularly interesting example in a national context.

Whilst of some local interest as a survival of an old tram system, this depot building lacks sufficient architectural or historic interest, in a national context, to merit Listing.”

Environment Agency raises no objection to the proposal. Recommends that, further to the preliminary site report into ground conditions, further investigations be carried out to determine any appropriate remediation works, to be agreed before any site clean-up works are commenced. Advises conditions covering remediation works and the submission of a closure report prior to any construction on site, and contamination not previously identified. Also advises on waste disposal, drainage, water conservation and the storage of fuel, oil and chemicals.

The Divisional Transport Manager raises no objection to the proposal provided the redundant vehicle access to the former tram shed is permanently closed. Advises cycle parking should be made available in accordance with the Kent Vehicle Parking Standards.

Comments further that the access arrangements that are proposed via the existing Westbrook House layout are acceptable. Stating that the impact of the proposed development would not be significant enough to create the need for further investigation. The car parking provision proposed is appropriate for the scale of the development, and the emergency access arrangements accord with the provision set out in the Kent Design Guide, meeting the minimum requirement of 3.0 m width for fire tenders.

The Airport Director Kent International Airport raises no objection provided the maximum overall height of the development does not exceed 20 m above ground level.

The County Archaeologist raises no objection to the proposed development subject to conditions securing building recording work on the tram shed before demolition, and a programme of archaeological work to evaluate the site’s archaeological potential and mitigate the proposed development’s impact.

Comments that the tram shed formed the western terminus of a tramway built and operated by the Isle of Thanet Electric Tramways & Lighting Company. It ran for 11 miles between Garlinge and Ramsgate through Westgate, Margate and Broadstairs.

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The line opened April 1904 and closed in 1937 when its services were replaced with buses.

Local Member

19. The local County Member for Margate West Mr. R. Burgess was notified of the application on 5 October 2005. Mr Burgess raises no objection to the application, however, requests that further consideration be given to the replacement of the part of Westbrook House's garden proposed for redevelopment, and that the tram tracks be retained as part of the development.

In addition, views have been received from the County Member for Margate and Cliftonville Mr. C. Hart, commenting that the tram shed and cobbled rail entrance form a valuable part of our local history in Thanet. The proposed development is without a doubt a worthy cause. Any development of the site must be carried out with due respect for our local history and the vulnerable residents. Mr Hart requested that the architect explore the possibility of using the tram shed as a unique entrance to any new development on the site. At the very least, that the existing tram tracks, present the entrance to the tram shed should be incorporated into any future design.

Mr Hart comments further, "I welcome the news to keep the tram tracks but this improvement would only be worthwhile if the wall between the tracks and the main road were as low as possible so that local residents could see the historic tracks when walking past. At the very least a wide viewing point is required from the pavement in Canterbury Road. If we save the tracks it is important that people should be able to see them."

Representations

20. 7 letters of representation have been received from local residents. The main points raised can be summarised as follows:

- Objects to loss of the tram shed, a building of local historic importance that is part of Margate's heritage and should be preserved for future generations;
- The proposal represents over development of the site;
- The proposed building is too near the boundaries of 144 and 146 Canterbury Road and represents an unnecessarily imposing structure. Consideration should be given to moving the building further to the centre of the site or to the rear of Victoria House.
- The car parking indicated on the drawings is too close to the boundary of 146 Canterbury Road and will generate excessive noise.
- The demolition of the tram shed would cause severe overlooking problems to 146 Canterbury Road as there are full height glazed windows built into the facing elevation of Westbrook House. The screening indicated the drawings it totally inadequate.
- The design of Westbrook House, and therefore the proposed design of the supported apartments, does not blend in with the surrounding properties;
- The proposed access road layout conflicts with the existing layout on site and would not pass a fire inspection.
- The traffic generated by the proposed development would be detrimental and dangerous at the already busy junction of between Maynard Avenue, George V

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Avenue and Canterbury Road where the traffic from Westbrook House joins Canterbury Road. This would adversely impact on the amenity of local properties;

- Concerns that there is insufficient car parking proposed;
- The site is not appropriate for mental health patients due to: the railway to the rear of the property; the proximity of residential to the proposed site; and the A28 Canterbury Road, a busy access road for the Thanet area.
- The category of patients that are to be housed in the new building has not been provided. The point has relevance as we have two children in care who live with us and as such their safe keeping is of paramount importance.
- Concerns about security and well being;
- Prior to the redevelopment of the old Westbrook Day Hospital in February 2002 a public meeting was held with local residents in the Methodist Hall, Garlinge, at which assurances were given that there would be no facilities for those with mental health problems at the site and that the retention of the tram shed was assured;
- The St. Johns Brigade put the tram shed to good use.

Discussion

21. This proposal is an outline application for the erection of a new building to accommodate 7 supported apartments and communal facilities, associated access arrangements and car parking. It is necessary to consider the development in the context of the Development Plan, the most relevant policies are outlined in paragraph (17) above, the effect of the development in terms of its location, and the effects on the local environment and amenity.
22. As this is an outline application, it is the principle of the proposed development that is being established and the applicant can reserve certain matters for later consideration, should Members be minded to grant planning permission. In this case, the reserved matters are external appearance, landscaping and design, whilst siting and means of access are to be considered now.

Siting

23. The development would be located on an area of land currently occupied by a former tram shed and part of the rear gardens of Westbrook House residential care home. The proposed site is located off Canterbury Road, and is bounded by residential property, Westbrook House and a railway line. The surrounding properties vary in height with predominantly two storey residential housing located to the south and east along Canterbury Road, with the two storey Westbrook House located to the south west. The apartment block proposed would effectively be constructed to the rear of the gardens of residential property at 142, 144 and 146 Canterbury Road within the grounds of Westbrook House. Access to this site would be provided through the demolition of a former tram shed that adjoins 146 Canterbury Road.
24. A number of concerns have been raised regarding the location of the development and its proximity to residential property from both Local Planning Authority (see paragraph 18) and local residents (summarised in paragraph 20 above). The submitted drawings show the proposed building, at its closest point, would be approximately 4 metres from the boundary the site and over 40 metres from the façade of the nearest residential

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property. Westbrook House would be approximately 17 metres to the south west of the proposed building with the railway cutting 15 metres to the north.

25. Consideration needs to be given as to whether the proposed development respects the character or rhythm of the locality in terms of an appropriate scale and massing, compatibility with neighbouring buildings and spaces, and whether the development would result in an unacceptable loss in residential amenity through overlooking, loss of light or creating an unacceptable sense of enclosure.
26. The Kent Design Guide advice on distances between windows of habitable rooms is 21 metres, to minimise any potential loss of privacy. The distances between window and wall, or wall to wall can be much closer. Given that the distance from the proposed apartments to the closest residential development at 144 Canterbury Road would be in excess of 40 metres, and the distance to the main façades of the residential buildings at 144 and 146 Canterbury Road would be in excess of 50 metres, the issue of direct views into residential buildings from the proposed apartments is within the acceptable guidance.
27. The potential impact of the proposal on the residents of Westbrook House also needs to be considered. The proposed development would be approximately 17 metres from the nearest corner. However, given the orientation of the proposed apartments and Westbrook House, this measurement is on an angle and any potential direct views from building to building would be at a greater distance.
28. The proposed apartments' location, directly adjacent to the rear of the gardens of residential property, has the potential to impact on amenity, with regards neighbours enjoyment of their gardens. The proposal would be located 12 metres from the rear boundary of 146 and approximately 4 metres from the boundaries of 144 and 142 Canterbury Road. The existing boundary treatment consists of a low boundary wall along the north end of the site between the grounds of Westbrook House, 142 and 144 Canterbury Road, rising up to a high level wall around the tram shed. The orientation of the proposed building could potentially result in overlooking from widows within the south east and south west elevations. The limited specific design information provided within an outline application mean that issues such as overlooking have to be treated in very general terms. However the guidance provided by the applicant has indicated that any future detail design would take account of overlooking, limiting direct views from the apartment towards residential property through the provision of high level windows or obscured glazing. This issue could be further mitigated through the provision of a high level boundary treatment along the complete eastern boundary of the site and the provision of planting in appropriate locations to screen and soften the development. The appropriate guidance indicates that it is the area of residential gardens directly adjacent to the buildings that should be afforded the most protection from overlooking with views over the far end of gardens less likely to impact on residential amenity. I would advise that as the proposal would be over 40 metres from the most sensitive locations within neighbouring gardens, and that a careful combination of appropriate design and boundary landscaping should limit the impact of the development.
29. The siting of the proposed building would impact on the amenity space available to the residents of Westbrook House, effectively reducing the garden area provided. In response to the local County Member's request, the applicant looked at the options

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available to replace this space with another appropriate location within the site. The applicant has advised that the area to the north east of Westbrook House to the rear of Victoria House has been designated for the potential redevelopment of the GP surgery and there is no other appropriate location available for a replacement facility within the site. The management of Westbrook House has been involved with the proposal and has been consulted as part of the planning process; no concerns have been raised to date regarding the loss of this space. Given the remaining garden area available and the lack of any written concerns on this issue, I would consider that the loss of part of the garden available at Westbrook House is acceptable.

30. In addition to the proposed building, the siting of car park directly adjacent to the boundary of 146 Canterbury Road has resulted in concerns being raised by both local residents and Thanet District Council. In response to these concerns the applicant has reduced the number of spaces provide in this locality and indicated that landscaping would be provided along the boundary and between the parking bays. However, due to the restrictions of the site the applicant has advised that there is no possibility of moving this car parking further from this boundary. This arrangement has the potential to impact on the residential amenity of the garden of 146 Canterbury Road and would result in parking bays being located a metre from the boundary and approximately 15 metres from the rear façade of 146 and 17 metres from the closest façade of 144 Canterbury Road. Depending on the height of the final boundary wall this car parking could may or may not be visible from these properties. However, the noise of vehicles moving into the bays and along the driveway that passes within approximately 6 metres of 146 Canterbury Road could impact on the amenity of neighbouring properties. I would advise that given that no alternate locations are available for the car parking arrangement, and a development without such facilities would be unacceptable, consideration needs to be given as to whether the proposed arrangement is acceptable.
31. The proposed site is relatively small and in close proximity to residential property and the application proposes to maximise the use of the space available. However, within the confines of this space the position proposed for the apartments ensures the distances to neighbouring buildings are kept as high as practicable. The proposed two storey structure reflects the massing of the surrounding buildings and the applicant has given further guidance on the future detailed design, advising that the roof line and materials would reflect those used in the development of Westbrook House. Whilst the location to the rear of resident property has the potential to impact on the amenity of these properties, I would advise that given the orientation of the structure and the careful consideration of all reserved details submitted regarding the design of the building and surrounding landscaping, the development would be acceptable in its proposed location. The issue that causes me more concern is the location of the car park and access road adjacent to residential property. The development is unlikely to generate large numbers of vehicle movements; however, with part time staff supporting the residents', movements will be regular. On balance, subject to the submission of acceptable reserved details on the design of the building and further details of a strong landscaping and boundary treatment, I would advise that the siting of the building, access and car parking arrangements are acceptable and the proposal accords with Structure Plan Policies ENV15, ENV16, Deposit Structure Plan Policies SP1 and QL1, Isle of Thanet Local Plan Policies H1 and CB1 and Draft Thanet Local Plan Policies H1, HNP3 and D1.

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Traffic and Access

32. The site is located off Canterbury Road (A28), a major access route into Margate. The development would involve the demolition of an existing tram shed (see below) to allow the provision of an access drive around Westbrook House and the provision of a car park and turning circle. The tram shed has an existing vehicle access on to Canterbury Road, however this access was not deemed appropriate given the volume of traffic using Canterbury Road and the junction between Canterbury Road, George V Avenue and Maynard Avenue opposite this egress. On the advice of Kent Highway Services, the application proposes to link the vehicle access with the existing Westbrook House access arrangements and road layout. Westbrook House enjoys a large car park and approved entrance and egress onto Canterbury Road. The traffic flow into the proposed site would be routed around the existing electrical sub station provided for Westbrook House (see attached plan).
33. Concerns have been raised about the potential traffic that could be generated by the development, the practicality of the access road and the level of car parking provided for the development. I would advise that the car parking arrangements proposed are acceptable given the scale of the proposal. Kent Highway Services have no objection to the scheme, subject to the permanent closure of the tram shed access on to Canterbury Road. The Divisional Transport Manager comments that the access arrangements, as proposed, are acceptable and meet the required standard in terms of emergency access. The Transport Manager also advises that the effect of the proposed development on traffic entering and existing the Westbrook House site would not be significant enough to create the need for further investigation into its impact.
34. The site is located on a major transport route into Margate and enjoys good public transport links. Whilst I acknowledge that there would be an increase in traffic as a result of the development, I consider that given the scale of the proposed apartment block, the access and parking facilities proposed, the existing facilities available at Westbrook House, and the public transport links, the impact of traffic associated with the proposal would be acceptable and that it would not warrant refusal of the application. On this basis the traffic aspects of the proposal accords with Structure Plan Policy T17, Deposit Structure Plan Policies TP2 and TP19, Thanet Local Plan Policy TR8 and Draft Thanet Local Plan Policy TR17.

Demolition of Tram shed

35. The application as proposed involves the demolition of an existing tram shed, a double height brick built building with corrugated metal/asbestos roof, open at the southern end. The County Archaeologist has confirmed that the shed formed the western terminus of the tramway built to service the Thanet area. The route ran for 11 miles between Garlinge and Ramsgate through Westgate, Margate and Broadstairs, opening in 1904 and closing in 1937 when its services were replaced with buses.
36. Concerns have been raised about the demolition of this building by Thanet District Council, the County Member for Margate & Cliftonville Mr C. Hart and a number of local residents. During the processing of this proposal an application was made to English Heritage by Thanet District Council to have the tram shed Listed. However, this application was turned down on the reasons received from English Heritage set out in paragraph 18. English Heritage comment that 'whilst of some local interest as a survival

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of an old tram system, the depot building lacks sufficient architectural or historic interest, in a national context, to merit Listing.' The County Archaeologist raises no objection to the demolition, but advises that the building may retain elements of early Twentieth Century architectural and industrial archaeological of significance and requires a condition covering a programme of building recording prior to demolition.

37. In response to the request of Mr Hart, the applicant looked into the feasibility of retaining the tram shed as part of the proposed development. However, the applicant has confirmed that there is no feasible alternative to the access route proposed. The retention of the tram shed as a vehicle access would involve creating an opening to the rear and/or side wall of the building, which would affect its structural integrity. Alongside, the use of the tram sheds access onto Canterbury Road, which is deemed to be unacceptable by the Divisional Transport Manager, both of these issues making any retention of the structure within the proposed redevelopment unfeasible. The applicant has noted the local interest and the wish to retain a memory of the past, and confirmed that the proposed development would preserve the cobbled access and tram tracks as part of the design and that the previous location of the external walls would be expressed on site through the use of alternate surfacing materials, like cobblestones.
38. I acknowledge that the former tram shed is potentially of local interest historic interest. However, given the comments made by English Heritage and the County Archaeologist that the building has a renewed corrugated asbestos roof and is of plain/utilitarian design, and the absence of an objection from the District Council on these grounds, the demolition of this building could be undertaken through permitted development rights. It would therefore appear that the principle of the demolition of the building has been established and is acceptable, subject to a programme of building recording and the retention of the tram tracks and cobbled access.
39. The demolition of the tram shed would leave the residential property at 146 Canterbury Road and the eastern façade of Westbrook House approximately 15 metres apart. Given that the recently redeveloped Westbrook House was designed with the tram shed in position, the east elevation of the care home has full height windows that face the blank wall of the shed, but would face the boundary line should the shed be removed. As such, the removal of the tram shed could create the potential for overlooking between neighbouring properties. However, I would advise that as the tram shed is not to be Listed, the demolition of a building outside of a Conservation Area, subject to written approval from the Local Planning Authority, is afforded permitted development rights. I would consider that the removal of the tram shed in association with a planning application allows the careful management of the boundary treatment in order to prevent any loss of privacy to either building.

Landscaping and loss of trees

40. The application as proposed would involve the loss of a number of trees on site. The majority of these are young saplings, recently planted within the garden area of Westbrook House. A small number of mature trees are located within the boundary of the tram shed, they appear to be self seeded and are growing in close proximity to each other, which is affecting the growth of individual trees. The applicant has advised that the landscaping scheme would mitigate for any losses on site. Due to the outline nature of the development, the applicant has reserved landscaping as a matter to be dealt with through a later submission. Whilst I have no objection to this, I would advise that careful

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consideration needs to be given to the landscaping provided at the site. I would therefore recommend that a condition requiring the submission of landscaping detail. I also recommend that the applicant be advised by informative that the landscaping scheme should seek to retain as much of the existing vegetation as possible and that special consideration should be paid to the boundary treatment to the east of the site; with a view to reducing the impact of the access road, car parking and apartment block on residential property.

Archaeology

41. The application site lies in an area where previous archaeological investigations have found evidence of both prehistoric and Roman activity and the County Archaeologist has advised that the proposed site might harbour archaeological remains. It is therefore recommended that a condition is place on any grant of planning permission requiring that prior to any development taking place at the site that a programme of archaeological work is completed in accordance with an approved written specification.

Security

42. Concerns have been raised by local residents about the security of the site and whether the location is acceptable for vulnerable residents. I would acknowledge that the site is bounded to the north by a railway line and to the south by the A28. However, Westbrook House already comfortably accommodates elderly residents providing 24 hour care and medical facilities in close proximity. I would suggest that in accompaniment to the staffing to be provided by Social Services to support the residents, the acceptability of the site to accommodate vulnerable individuals has been established. The train lines are screened by a high boundary wall and whilst Canterbury Road is a busy route, the footpath arrangements in the locality are acceptable and the road allows immediate access to public transport. I would advise that the low boundary treatment to the north east would need to be improved as part of the scheme; however, this has more to do with maintaining residential amenity than security.
43. Reference has been made to a public meeting undertaken as part of the consultations for the redevelopment of Westbrook House back in 2002. I am unable to comment on the content or outcomes of this meeting, and can only assess the acceptability of application that has been brought forward on this occasion based on the provisions set out in the Development Plan and appropriate Government Guidance.

Demolition and Construction

44. The application would involve the demolition of the tram shed on the site. Given the proximity of this building to residential property, were members minded to grant permission, the impact of any demolition and/or construction work on local residents should be minimised through a condition limiting all activity on site in association with the proposed development to the hours 0800 to 1800 Monday to Friday and 0900 to 1300 on Saturdays. Conditions should also require measures to be taken to minimise dust and ensure mud and other debris is not deposited on the public highway.
45. The Ground Condition Report prepared in association with this application recommends further investigations at the site to determine any appropriate remediation works to mitigate for ground contamination. Conditions covering the submission of a further

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detailed report, the completion of any appropriate mitigation, and the submission of a closure report, as advised by the Environment Agency, would be an appropriate means of addressing this issue.

Need

46. Due to the material planning objections that have been raised, need becomes a balancing factor. With regard to the need for the development the applicant has advised that the development is required to improve the County Council's provision of appropriate accommodation for vulnerable people. The applicant has advised that outline planning permission is being sought in order to facilitate the PFI process to obtain the funding required to realise the extra care and supported accommodation required in Thanet and around the County.

Conclusion

47. This is an outline application and therefore it is the principle of the development only, which needs to be considered at this stage. The application has to be considered in the context of the Development Plan and in relation to the location of the proposed development set against the impact of the proposal and the need for the facility. Issues have been raised in relation to, amongst other points, the location of the building, the access and car park, the potential loss of amenity and privacy from the development, and the demolition of a building on local historic interest.
48. On balance, and notwithstanding the concerns expressed about the potential impacts of the development on the locality raised by Thanet District Council and local residents, I consider that the benefits of the provision of such a facility to the wider community outweigh any detrimental impacts the proposal may have. It is therefore recommended that subject to conditions, proposed to mitigate for any harm resulting from the development, planning permission should be granted.

Recommendation

49. I RECOMMEND that PERMISSION BE GRANTED SUBJECT TO the imposition of conditions including the standard outline time conditions, the submission of reserved details relating to external appearance, landscaping and design, the development being carried out in accordance with the approved plans, a programme of building recording, a programme of archaeological work, the retention of the cobbled entrance and tram tracks, tree protection measures, the submission of a further ground contamination report and completion of remedial work, further ground contamination conditions as recommended by the Environment Agency, all fenestrations in the south eastern elevation to be obscured or high level, hours of operation during construction and demolition, dust suppression measures, measures to ensure no mud is deposited on the public highway, no external lighting to be install without prior approval, the provision of car parking spaces prior to the first occupation, the permanent closure of the existing vehicle access to the tram shed site from Canterbury Road, the provision of cycle parking, the height of the building not to exceed 20 metres, and the use of the building be restricted solely for the uses applied for.

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50. I FURTHER RECOMMEND that the applicant be advised by informative of the concerns raised about loss of amenity and privacy, the need to limit the number of facing windows, and provide strong boundary screening to the east through hard and soft landscaping. The landscaping scheme should seek to retain as much of the existing vegetation as possible, and special consideration should be paid to the boundary treatment to the east of the site, with a view to reducing the impact of the access road, car parking and apartment block on residential property.

Case officer – James Bickle	01622 221068
Background documents - See section heading	