

Southern Planning Committee meeting 13/12/2022

Additional comments by Bridgnorth Town Council on application 21/10963/FUL - Erection of a 66 bed care home for older people, with associated car park, access and landscaping at Land adjacent to Sainsburys Supermarket, Smithfield Car Park, Bridgnorth.

We originally commented on this application in June 2021. We objected that the proposed use of the building as a Care Home does not represent what would normally be accepted as a “Town Centre” use, despite roughly one third of the site area being within the defined Town Centre of Bridgnorth. We did not consider that the local need for this facility had been demonstrated. We expressed concerns over the scale and massing of the building on this relatively open site close to the Conservation area We expressed a concern over the loss of parking spaces to support access to Town Centre facilities.

Since we submitted our original objection, there have been some design changes to the building and the issue of the risk of cricket ball strike has attracted much attention.

In our original comment we referred to the lack of demonstrated local demand for this care home facility and questioned why it was proposed to site one in what amounts to a town centre location. Whilst we are told that market research has identified this area as suitable for a new care home, and as having an undersupply in the provision of care beds, there is little detail available publicly to demonstrate this. It is also not clear whether there are other sites in the area which the applicants may have considered, and why this Town Centre site may be preferable. Members will appreciate that the previous approved scheme was for retail units, and much was made at the time of the potential to enhance Bridgnorth Town Centre’s retail offering through a format of shops which was not otherwise available in the area, and of the potential for linked trips to the town centre. Should this site now be developed as a care home it would clearly not be available for retail purposes in future and would create some pressure for future retail provision to be in “out of centre” locations.

The ongoing debate about the risk of cricket ball strike has highlighted that this may not be the best location for a residential facility. We agree with Sport England that long term reliance on management denying residents access to part of the outside area when cricket is being played or practiced seems inappropriate.

Whilst we acknowledge that efforts have been made to improve the proposal’s visual impact, it still represents a large building for this location, which currently has an open aspect. The current proposal is for a building which is 11.6m to 12.8m high across its full extent, whereas the proposal granted permission under ref 16/02739/FUL was significantly lower (up to 4 metres shorter) along the Southern part of its frontage mirroring the height of the adjacent Sainsbury’s store.

In summary, we feel that the building is too big for the site, and that the proposed use as a care home does not make the best use of a site which is partly within the designated Town Centre of Bridgnorth.