



MEMBERS BRIEFING NOTE
APPLICATION REFERENCE: 21/501740/FULL
BY DEMELZA HOSPICE CARE FOR CHILDREN
& ESQUIRE DEVELOPMENTS
CLAGUE ARCHITECTS



Dear Councillor,

At the Planning Committee on Thursday 14th October you will be asked to consider the Detailed Planning Application for the erection of nurse accommodation and 30 residential dwellings on Land at Hill Farm Bobbing, submitted by Demelza Hospice Care for Children and Esquire Developments.

In preparation for Planning Committee we would like to take this opportunity to provide you with an overview of the site background, site history, the proposals and key benefits of our scheme.

Councillors may recall that Planning Permission has already been granted for a very similar scheme for nurses accommodation and 20 residential dwellings in 2018.



WITHIN THE SITE LOOKING NORTH



EXISTING DRAINAGE POND ALONG ROOK LANE



EXISTING HOUSING ON ROOK LANE



LOOKING NORTH ALONG KEYCOL HILL



VIEW LOOKING NORTH ALONG ROOK LANE

Members will of course recognise the important work the Demelza Hospice Care for Children undertake in the local community and that it is a much respected and valuable local institution providing a vital service to children.

Demelza are located to the west of Rook Lane and has for many years found it difficult to attract and recruit suitable and well trained nursing staff. One of the main reasons for Demelza's difficulty in attracting staff is that potential nursing staff prefer to work in a London hospice which offers staff accommodation. Demelza is trying to address this nursing shortage through supporting newly-qualified nurses in partnership with Canterbury College and others and through recruiting from abroad. However, without being able to offer staff accommodation, recruitment will always remain a very difficult issue. In addition to the lack of accommodation for staff, the existing parking provision and lack of an outdoor even space is severely limited.

Full Planning Permission for the provision of a 3 unit accommodation building, car park and outdoor event space for Demelza, the erection of 20 private residential dwellings, together with associated access, parking, highway works, drainage and landscaping on site was subsequently approved by the Planning Committee in November 2018 (ref: 18/500258/FULL).

Unfortunately, since the grant of Planning Permission, and as part of the detailed technical work – it became clear that in order to deliver the proposed off site highway works and proposed access, third party land would be required. Furthermore, following a review of the viability of the scheme, it was found that the overall quantum and housing mix of the 2018 permission did not work. As such, following pre application advice with both Swale Borough Council and Kent County Council Highways, it was recognised that a revised scheme with a greater enabling element (i.e. the residential element) was required.

Esquire Developments have now been appointed as the preferred development partner with Demelza to deliver the scheme. Esquire are a multi-award winning SME housebuilder based in Longfield, Kent. Esquire build high quality bespoke homes and take a dedicated and individual approach to each of their sites. They currently build approximately 100 homes a year and recently completed a scheme for 9 dwellings at Eden Meadows in nearby Newington in 2019.



Demelza
Hospice Care for Children
Registered Charity Number 1039651



EXTANT SCHEME (18/500258/FULL)

The general design approach to the new scheme remains as per the 2018 scheme with Demelza facilities remaining largely identical to before. The overall layout and design approach of the residential development remains broadly as approved, but with a revised access that is considered a significant improvement, and a housing mix that provides an increase in the number of dwellings by 10, but also a greater mix than before, offering smaller 2 and 3 bed dwellings as well as 4 and 5 beds (the 2018 scheme only offered 4 and 5 beds).

The key changes to the scheme are as follows:

- Increased landscaping within the scheme, including an increased landscape buffer to the countryside to the north and east.

- Relocating the residential access to Keycol Hill (previously Rook Lane). Rook Lane is to be realigned through part of the site to provide for an improved access onto Keycol Hill than the present junction, which will be stopped up to vehicles (but not cycles or pedestrians) The existing Bus Stop will be relocated here.
- The overall quantum of residential development will increase to 30 units and the housing mix will be amended to provide for a greater variation in the types of properties available, now ranging from 2-5 bed dwellings meeting a wider market demand (as opposed to large detached dwellings previously approved).



PROPOSED SCHEME (21/501740/FULL)

- Esquire Developments wishes to positively address the Climate Change emergency. In this regard Esquire Developments is committed to ensure its homes achieve and exceed a 50% Carbon Reduction. This is achieved by a fabric first approach, combined with Air Source Heat Pumps to provide heating and hot water. In addition, all dwellings will be served by an electric vehicle charging point to encourage and provide for the take up of electric vehicles.

- Furthermore, as before, the application is supported by a full Viability Appraisal which has been independently assessed by external viability assessors. This demonstrates the revised scheme of 30 units is the minimum required in order to deliver the Demelza facilities and associated highway infrastructure works, and that no affordable housing or S106 contributions can be delivered.



SUMMARY:

- The revised scheme is considered necessary to unlock the existing planning permission and deliver the much needed facilities for Demelza. The amended scheme results in an improvement to the approved scheme. The access provides a significant improvement that allows for wider visibility splays, is considered safer, more user friendly and allows for further landscaping along the site frontage (including retention of more trees and vegetation). Whilst the quantum of residential development has increased, it is the minimum required from a viability perspective and overall can be accommodated sensitively on site and follows the general layout previously approved. Likewise, the housing mix provides a wider variety of units, including more 2 and 3 bedroom units which reflects the needs of the current market.
- The provision of staff accommodation would enable Demelza to recruit much needed care staff and provide full time workers with living facilities.
- The increase in parking provision would help meet the existing and future parking needs of the site, and therefore reduce the number of cars which overspill onto Rook Lane. Likewise, the surface material and location of the proposed car parking would make it accessible and easier for wheelchair users in comparison to the existing plastic gridding and gravel surface.
- The outdoor area for events space would enable the charity to hold more events and involve the local community and make the hospice itself the hub of fundraising activities.



We hope that you support your Officer's recommendation to approve this application and look forward to delivering this much needed scheme.