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Mr. K. Williams
Head of Planning and Building Control
Wealden District Council
Vicarage Lane
Hailsham
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16.05.2016

Dear Mr. Williams

Pre application meeting Hailsham Ambulance Station and Firstfields, 42 London Road, Hailsham BN27 3BU

I refer to the above site, and the pre application meeting scheduled for 11.30am on Wednesday 27 July 2016. Accompanying this letter is an outline site plan with our draft proposals set out, and some photographs of the site access. The fee will be paid separately, direct by SECAMB.

Background

The following information may be helpful in understanding the context of the proposals. The South East Coast Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust was formed as a result of the merger of the former ambulance services of Kent, Surrey and Sussex. The Trust covers a geographical area of 3,500 square miles and provides emergency services to a population of over 4.3 million people in Kent, Surrey, Sussex and to selected geographic areas within Berkshire and North East Hampshire on the Surrey County boundary. Within its catchment area the Trust serves both urban and rural areas as well as having some of the busiest stretches of motorway in the country.

The Trust has embarked on an operationally led re-structuring programme which aims to replace many of the existing ambulance stations with larger Make Ready Centre's (MRC's) at strategic locations across the South East and smaller Ambulance Community Response Points (ACRP's). Make Ready Centre's (MRCs) already exist and are operational at Chertsey, Hastings, Thanet, Paddock Wood and Ashford. Additional MRCs are proposed at Brighton, Guildford/Godalming, Arundel, Polegate, Medway, Redhill and Crawley. The main criteria for choosing locations for MRC's is that they are central to dispatch catchment areas and close to main hospitals.

The objectives of the restructuring programme are to improve the quality of facilities and the efficiency of the service by consolidating certain facilities, which do not need to be located at a local level. Efficiency savings will allow for more investment in front-line services, staff, clinical developments and innovation.

The restructuring is necessary as a result of changing patterns in society, which have resulted in services being gradually stretched over larger more densely populated areas than the majority of existing Ambulance Stations were initially intended to cover. The proposals will help enhance the patient experience through a more rigorous vehicle and equipment deep cleaning and an infection control regime at a specialist MRC. Consolidating vehicle repairs at MRC's allows for more thorough and regular maintenance (six weekly intervals) than at the existing network of Ambulance Stations and in turn improves the reliability of the fleet. Similarly locating a larger quantity of medical stocks and supplies at an MRC is safer than maintaining smaller stocks and supplies at the larger network of existing Ambulance Stations, which are more likely to become exhausted in periods of increased demand, with a higher level wastage due to many supplies reaching their expiry date more quickly. It is envisaged that the MRC's will be able to afford a higher level of security for equipment and vehicles than the existing network of Ambulance Stations which are more vulnerable to the increased threat of terrorism. The more modern replacement facilities will also be of a higher standard and have a lower carbon footprint.

In addition to the above, the decision to re-structure the service has been taken to provide for a more responsive and available ambulance service. This is based on the fact that, unlike the Fire & Rescue Service who respond predominantly to fires that are in buildings in known and fixed locations, patients move; there is a changing temporal and geographical distribution of demand to which there is a pattern which takes into account geography, time of day, seasonal factors and patterns of population movement. To meet these patterns, a system of more flexible "Ambulance Community Response Posts" (ACRP) are used, which are locations occupied by ambulances and their crews whilst awaiting a call to respond to an emergency. These posts vary depending on the factors identified above. Once a crew have responded to a call, they would need to return to an MRC, for medical stock and supplies to be replenished, minor vehicle maintenance and repairs to take place, and for crews to refresh before returning to an appropriate response or standby post. The amount of time spent in the MRC will be minimal, in order to ensure that the time spent responding, or being in a position to respond, is maximised.

As a result of the above, the Hailsham Ambulance Station is surplus to requirements, and the Trust is seeking its redevelopment, in order to fund the MRC restructuring programme. The site to the south of the Ambulance Station is owned by East Sussex County Council and has been used as a training centre for Social Services. The training centre is also surplus to requirements. SECAMB and the County Council are seeking to jointly dispose of the sites, and as part of the disposal strategy it is necessary to establish the planning potential of the two sites together. A pre application meeting has therefore been arranged in order to establish this potential.

The site

The site amounts to approximately 0.9ha in area, and is located to the north east of Hailsham town centre and High Street. Hailsham is one of the main towns in the area. The surrounding area is mainly residential. The ambulance station consists of a single storey building surrounded by hardstanding. The training centre building is part single storey and part two storey and has an

extensive area of hardstanding to the frontage used for car parking. There is limited landscaping on the site, mainly to the site boundaries.

The existing land use of the site is as an ambulance station (sui generis use) and a training centre (D1). The buildings are located to the northern part of the site with car parking to the southern part. Access to the site is off London Road (B2104).

Having regard to the Environment Agency flooding maps, the site is not within a flood zone. The buildings are not Listed Buildings, and the site does not lie within a Conservation Area or within an Area of Archaeological Importance. The site lies outside the South Downs National Park area. The site lies within the defined development boundary of Hailsham, having regard to the Adopted Proposals map. There are no public rights of way through the site.

The development plan

The development plan for the area consists of the Core Strategy adopted in 2013 and the saved policies of the Adopted Wealden Local Plan 1998. The Council are preparing a new Local Plan but this is in the early stages of preparation.

Having regard to the development plan, and the character of the surrounding area, the site is suitable for residential redevelopment.

The proposal

The accompanying drawings show the potential for redeveloping the site with a comprehensive residential development. The development proposed contains a mix of 1, 2 and 3 bed flats and houses, with fifteen units in total. All the units have adequate amenity space and car parking.

In addition, the site also accommodates an Ambulance Community Response Post (ACRP). This is located to the front of the site in order to maximise easy access to the highway network, and also to minimise the impact on the proposed residential units further in to the site. The retention of the ambulance service use on the site, although in a different function than a traditional ambulance station, will ensure that the area can continue to be served by the emergency service but in a more effective and flexible manner.

Having regard to the above, advice is sought in relation to the following;

1. The acceptability of the proposed development in terms of the principle of use, amount of development, layout (including car parking), scale, landscaping and access;
2. The likely list of supporting documents that would be necessary to support an application for full planning permission;
3. The likely list of planning obligations.

I look forward to meeting you as soon as possible to discuss the above.

Yours sincerely



Colin Smith
Associate

cc Mr S. Laker