

Planning Committee members
East Northamptonshire District Council
Northamptonshire House, Cedar Drive,
Thrapston, Kettering
NN14 4LZ



Date 02/03/2020

Dear Sir/Madam

Proposed extra care housing scheme at St. Christopher's Drive, Oundle

Further to our recent meeting with Roz Johnson and Carolyn Tait, I set below some information in support of Persimmon Homes' application for outline planning permission which includes an extra care scheme at the site to the south of St. Christopher's Drive, Oundle.

Background

Housing 21 is a leading not-for-profit provider of Retirement Housing and Extra Care Living for older people of modest means. We operate in nearly 200 local authority areas, managing around 20,000 Retirement and Extra Care Living properties and providing over 42,000 hours of social care each week. We are exclusively focussed on providing specialist affordable housing for older people and we do not provide general needs housing.

We currently own and operate 135 Extra Care facilities across England which makes us the largest provider of this type of housing in the country. We have one existing scheme in Northamptonshire: Foxfields in Northampton which consists of 77 flats, all for rent. This scheme was completed in 2017. We have a nominations agreement with Northamptonshire County Council for Foxfields and have built up a positive working relationship with them which has contributed to the successful running of the scheme. Housing 21 also have two schemes in Peterborough: St. Edmunds Court (51 flats built in 2009) and Bishopsfield Court (48 flats built in 1994).

We have a very strong track record developing new schemes and have our own Design Guide which draws on best practice and our extensive construction and operational experience. Housing 21 currently (as per February 2020) has 18 projects under construction nationally and our target is to develop 1,200 new units per annum by the year 2025.

St. Christopher's Drive

In June 2019 Persimmon Homes approached Housing 21 about the St. Christopher Drive site in Oundle. We carried out an analysis of demand and an assessment of the location itself and determined that the site is a very suitable one for a new extra care facility.

We then instructed Saunders Boston Architects to carry out some initial feasibility work adhering to the Housing 21 Design Guide. This resulted in a preliminary drawing for a 65 unit scheme. We propose the following tenure mix:

- 65% affordable rent: 42 flats of which 36 x one-bedroom and 6 x two-bedroom;
- 35% shared ownership: 23 flats of which 3 x one-bedroom and 20 x two-bedroom.

The initial business case was presented to Housing 21's Development Steering Group (DSG) for approval on 18th December 2019 and approval was granted to proceed.

The construction of extra care housing is much higher than general needs or retirement apartments. The cost increase is mainly due to the extensive communal spaces that need to be provided within an extra care facility. These communal spaces include a residents' lounge, flexible activity space, communal dining room, catering kitchen, hairdressing salon, guest suite, assisted bathroom, a laundry, buggy store, court manager's office, care manager's office, an interview room and a staff room. In an extra care scheme the communal space makes up approximately 35% of the total floor space of the building. This compares to around 18% for a typical block of general needs flats. There are also additional costs associated with providing specialist features including lifts, an IT call system for residents, an enhanced bathroom specification and fire control sprinkler systems.

Due to these extra costs the delivery of affordable extra care housing requires grant funding support from Homes England. The project on St. Christopher Drive site in Oundle will be no exception to this. If the land is gifted to Housing 21 by Persimmon (to fulfil part of the s106 obligation) then delivery of the scheme will still require substantial additional grant funding support from Homes England. In short, without the Homes England funding the scheme would not be viable and would therefore not come forward.

Next steps

If outline planning permission is granted in March 2020 Housing 21 will move immediately on to the next stage in order to deliver the scheme as promptly as possible. We anticipate the following steps will include:

- Instructing our solicitors and finalising the conditional Sale Agreement with Persimmon;
- Instructing Saunders Boston Architects to further develop the design;
- A public consultation event involving the Architect as well as members of Housing 21's Development and Operational Teams;
- Technical reports and Reserved Matters (RM) planning application;
- Grant funding application to Homes England (HE);
- Legal completion to take ownership of the land following approval of HE grant application and the RM planning permission;
- Tendering the build;
- Build out of the scheme: circa 18 months;
- Commissioning of the scheme according to the Housing 21 commissioning plan (this detailed step-by-step plan is set in motion as soon as a construction start is made).

Conclusion

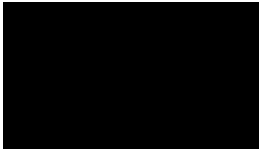
Housing 21 believes the proposed extra care scheme on St. Christophers Drive in Oundle will be of great benefit to the people of the town and indeed will fulfil an identified strategic need by the District. It will enable older residents to live independently while having care and support close at hand and made available according to their individual needs.

When it comes to extra care, Housing 21 is a market leader and is very experienced in delivering well designed, high quality, affordable schemes. Our proposal is for a 100% affordable scheme consisting of two tenure options to meet the needs of the town and its rural hinterland: affordable rent and shared ownership. We are confident that the scheme can be delivered with the assistance of Homes England grant funding if the site is gifted to us by Persimmon under the s106 agreement.

Housing 21 has an established positive relationship with Northamptonshire County Council adult social care commissioners and we look forward to working with East Northamptonshire District Council (and the new Unitary Authority following the merger) on nominations, care commissioning, the promotion of the scheme and its successful operation in the longer term.

Attached a brochure with additional information about Housing 21. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

Yours faithfully




Property Development Manager

