

CHIGWELL PARISH COUNCIL – PLANNING COMMITTEE

EPF/1561/26 – 72 Manor Road, Chigwell, IG7 5PG

Proposal: Conversion of the existing house into six flats: five 1-bedroom and one 4-bedroom

Officer report

The main concern is affordable housing.

The application says the proposed scheme has a gross internal area of 1,160 sqm so Local Plan Policy H2 applies and 40% affordable housing is required on site. The application proposes none. The applicant relies on a viability assessment which says the scheme would still show a deficit of around £2.47m even with 0% affordable housing. This begs the question of why the development is proposed and invited close scrutiny of the viability assessment.

Local Plan Policy H2 requires an independent viability review by EFDC at the applicant's expense where viability is being used to reduce affordable housing. The Parish Council has not yet seen that review. It should be completed and published before the application is determined so that the figures and assumptions can be properly understood and scrutinised.

There are also questions over the land value. The Planning Statement says the property has been in the applicant family's ownership since 1997 and describes the benchmark land value as effectively a "sunk cost". However, supporting valuation material refers to a purchase in January 2008 for £2.325m. This may be explainable, but it needs to be reconciled and the benchmark land value independently tested. Historic ownership or purchase price should not in itself justify removing an affordable housing requirement.

The Parish Council and the public should also see the comments of EFDC's Affordable Housing Officer, including what affordable housing, tenure and unit mix would normally be required on this site.

There is a separate concern under Policy H1. Five of the six proposed homes are 1-bedroom market flats. The application does not clearly demonstrate why that particular mix is needed in Chigwell or how it reflects the existing local housing stock. Smaller market flats are not a substitute for affordable housing.

Parking is also below the applicant's own stated standard, 8 spaces against 8.5 required. The change from one household to six will increase vehicle movements and use of the frontage, accesses, parking and refuse areas. The applicant relies partly on access to Grange Hill station, although its own evidence places this around 1.3 km away. These matters should be considered against Policies T1 and DM9.

The site is also within the influence of the Epping Forest SAC. EFDC must complete the necessary Habitats Regulations assessment and secure mitigation under Policy DM2 before permission is granted. The submitted HRA should also be corrected as it refers in places to eight flats rather than six.

Recommendation – STRONGLY OBJECT

Suggested Parish Council comment

Chigwell Parish Council **STRONGLY OBJECTS** to the application in its present form.

The proposal triggers the 40% affordable housing requirement under Policy H2 but provides none. The applicant relies on viability to justify reducing the requirement to zero. The Parish Council considers that no decision should be made until EFDC's independent viability review has been completed and published and the comments of EFDC's Affordable Housing Officer are available.

The Parish Council wishes to reconsider the application once that information is published and, if the application is reported to Planning Committee A or B, requests the opportunity to address that Committee before a decision is made.

Further concerns remain over the housing mix under Policy H1, parking and intensification under Policies T1 and DM9, and the Epping Forest SAC requirements under Policy DM2.