

Homes for the Elderly

This Development Control Policy note was considered and accepted by the Planning and Development Committee at its meeting held on 22nd January, 1990. It was formally adopted by the Council at the meeting on 7th March, 1990, and forms the formal policy of the Council for Nursing Homes and Homes for the Elderly. Every application submitted will be considered within the context of the adopted policies and guidance, and the relevant merits of each proposal. If you need further advice or guidance for this policy document please contact Development Control using the details under the Contact header.

Development Control Guidelines

Homes for the Elderly

Introduction

1.1 This policy document is one of a series produced by the Development Control Section of Mansfield District Council. It has been produced in response to the recent increased interest in providing such homes.

1.2 The function of this document is to provide advice to developers on the main issues raised by this type of application and set down guidelines for this type of development. Its aims are threefold:-

1. To prevent developers incurring abortive expense for unsuitable sites.
2. To make sure that the development does not cause unacceptable disturbance or material loss of amenity to other residents in the vicinity.
3. To try and make sure a high quality environment for the residents of the homes.

2. Legislation

2.1 The overwhelming number of homes are not purpose built. Therefore, most applications involve a change of use to Class C2 - Residential Institutions of the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987. This Use Class includes both homes for the elderly and nursing homes. Briefly, the difference between residential care homes for the elderly, and nursing homes is that care homes are designed for people in need of care who may be infirm, but who are not incapacitated or disabled. Nursing homes are designed to provide 24 hour nursing care often for the handicapped and terminally ill. While it is accepted that there may be some difference in the characteristics of these uses, the same basic standards outlined in this document should apply to both. Planning permission would also be required for any extensions or additions to the property for its use as a home, and also to extend facilities provided in a home. The grant of planning permission for a change of use does not mean that future extensions will automatically be granted planning permission.

2.2 As well as seeking planning permission, please get advice from the following bodies at the earliest date:-

The Council's Building Control Manager To discuss any structural alterations to the building. The Council's Head of Environmental Health Services to discuss statutory legislation relating principally to food and occupational health and safety requirements. The Fire Officer To discuss requirements for means of escape and potential hazards. North Nottinghamshire Health Authority to discuss the need for registration, (Nursing Homes). Nottinghamshire County Council Social Services Department to discuss the need for registration, (Homes for the elderly and all other residential care homes). The Council's Principal Housing Officer to assess standards

3. The need for registration

3.1 Unless they are managed or provided by a body formed by an Act of Parliament or included by Royal Charter, all private and voluntary nursing homes in this area have to be registered with the North Nottinghamshire Health Authority. Residential care homes for the elderly are registered with the County Council Social Services Department. Registration can be refused on the grounds that the home would not provide adequate services or facilities reasonably required by residents or patients.

3.2 Developers should note that registration with either the Health Authority or Social Services does not mean that any planning permission will automatically be granted or vice versa. The Department of the Environment's Circular No. 13/87 states that it is important that intending developers should discuss their proposals with the registering Authority before investing money in them.

4. Suitable locations for homes

4.1 Although the Department of the Environment no longer issues guidelines for homes, we expect that the most suitable sites would be reasonably level, and close to main roads, public transport, and general amenities such as shops, post offices and churches.

4.2 Homes for the elderly located in areas further away from local shops and public transport are not necessarily unacceptable. However, they may prove less attractive to residents, have a more significant impact upon the area, and be likely to require extra car parking provision.

5. Character of the Local Area

5.1 It is often difficult to give a precise definition of the "character" of an area. However, the following guidelines have been adopted to try and make sure that any impact on the neighbourhood is minimised.

5.2 New development or a change of use will not be acceptable if it is likely to generate an unacceptable level of traffic or result in a detrimental change to the visual character of an area.

5.3 The introduction of a home for the elderly need not have a detrimental effect upon the character of a residential area. However, applicants must take adequate precautions to lessen any impact and pay careful attention to building details. It should be noted that an over concentration of these premises within a residential area can result in an unacceptable change in the character of the area such as to warrant refusal of planning permission.

5.4 The introduction of traffic will be judged against the capacity of the road leading to the home to accommodate extra vehicular use. The provision of car parking and servicing facilities is also most relevant and is considered under separate headings later in this Note.

5.5 Care must be taken to make sure that any external changes to a property are compatible with the external appearance of the building and, in some cases, are residential in character.

5.6 New build schemes should be designed to complement the character of the local area in terms of size, scale and siting of the building and they must also allow for sufficient space around for suitably located car parking and open space provision.

5.7 Extensions to homes should be designed to fit in with the main building and must allow for sufficient land around to meet any more car parking or open space requirements.

5.8 External fire escapes may require planning permission. Applicants should submit details for consideration together with a change of use or new-build planning application. Fire escapes should be positioned unobtrusively while still fulfilling their function. External fire escapes in prominent public positions will not be acceptable.

6. Type of Property suitable for conversion

6.1 The most typical and potentially suitable property for conversion tend to be larger, older houses, which are too big to be managed by an average sized household. The acceptability of this use would depend on site conditions and location.

6.2 Detached properties are often the most suitable for conversion as they generally have more land around for car parking, servicing and garden areas, and are less likely to raise issues of direct noise disturbance to adjoining properties. Extensive garden areas are considered to be essential, both as a visual amenity to residents who will often spend long periods within the building, and as a convenient private open space for sitting out. See Paragraph 8.

6.3 It is especially important that all bedrooms should have a pleasant outlook.

6.4 One problem encountered with very large buildings is that of size. The Health Authority is opposed to the establishment of large homes which might develop the characteristics of institutional care. They urge that home owners keep within a limit of below 40 residents.

6.5 It is recognised that smaller homes for the elderly may fulfil a very important role by providing a more intimate and possibly less institutional atmosphere than larger run homes. Because of this some properties within residential frontages may be suitable for conversion.

7. Relationship with nearby and adjoining properties

7.1 Applicants should try to minimise the impact of a home for the elderly upon nearby or adjoining properties and to safeguard the residents of Homes against disturbance from such properties.

7.2 Homes for the elderly tend not to be noisy uses but internal room arrangements can result in unacceptable uses sharing party walls with neighbouring properties, and vice versa. For this reason, the use of terraced or semi-detached properties, where an adjoining unit is still in use as a family dwelling, is considered unsuitable.

7.3 It is usually unacceptable for a kitchen, lounge or living room of a home for the elderly to share a party wall with a neighbouring bedroom.

7.4 Wherever possible "like" rooms should be positioned on either side of the party wall between a Home and the next door property(ies), e.g. a bedroom alongside a bedroom. As bedrooms in homes for the elderly are often more extensively used than in family homes the introduction of party walls is often necessary. Where it is not possible to position the rooms either side of a party wall and a working or living room cannot be separated from a neighbouring bedroom, then it will almost certainly prove necessary for sound proofing measures to be done by the applicant. The applicant should ascertain the thickness of the party wall to provide information about the type of sound insulation that may prove necessary. The views of the Head of Environmental Health will be sought where a potential noise problem may exist and applicants will be expected to meet any sound insulation requirements.

7.5 Bedrooms within homes tend to be used more intensively than those within private dwellings and therefore the distances between bedroom windows and boundaries are more critical. Therefore substantially greater distances than those prescribed in the Development Control Policy Note 'Space about dwellings and floor space standards for residential accommodation' will apply.

7.6 In the case of extensions to dwellings, proposals involving the overlooking of neighbouring dwellings or their gardens will not usually be acceptable.

8. Open Space Provision

8.1 Residential homes for the elderly must provide a reasonable area of private open space, or be located immediately adjacent to public areas of open space. It is felt that a home should have a private outdoor sitting area for the enjoyment of residents. This should be pleasantly laid out and have a sheltered and sunny aspect.

8.2 It is not possible to set down precise space standards for garden areas to be applied in every case, as other factors such as the shape of the garden, its

orientation, etc., can be important. However, the following guidelines have been drawn up to help prospective developers:-

8.3 Private open space may take the form of garden areas, seating areas, patios etc., and should be separate from car parking, servicing, and other work areas.

8.4 The open space should be easily accessible to residents, i.e. either on the same level or readily accessible by a ramp.

8.5 The garden should not be overshadowed by adjoining buildings.

8.6 The garden should offer privacy to residents.

8.7 The garden should be of a regular shape. It should provide an area sufficient to make sure a reasonable level of residential amenity for the occupiers of the home, taking into account the number of people who will be resident in the home. Each application will be considered on its own merits, taking into account the unique conditions associated with different sites. The Council believes that a minimum garden area of 17 sq.m. per resident should be provided in all cases, but that substantially higher levels of garden space should be aimed for. If there are to be less than 10 residents, the garden should have a minimum size of 170 sq.m. To calculate garden space, separate and narrow strips of amenity space about the building shall be excluded.

8.8 Where the owner (and family) lives together with the residents of a Home, then the need for a reasonable area of truly private open space takes on greater significance. In such instances, the provision of private open space becomes essential and the area provided should be sufficient to meet both the needs of the residents and the owner (and family) on a communal basis.

8.9 Outside work areas such as dustbin storage and clothes drying areas should be positioned away from areas of private open space so as to safeguard neighbouring properties and the habitable rooms of the Home from excessive noise, smell and general disturbance. Applicants should pay careful attention to the positioning of work areas so as to safeguard neighbours and residents at the Home from excessive disturbance. Shared work areas and areas of open space will not be acceptable. Wherever possible, dustbins should be contained within purpose built shelters, especially where located in prominent public locations.

9. Car Parking and Servicing

9.1 The creation of a home for the elderly, whether by conversion or as a new purpose built structure is likely to result in increased traffic generation to and from the site. Therefore, on site parking provision is essential to accommodate this, and to prevent excessive on-street parking which may represent a traffic hazard or create disturbance to nearby residents.

9.2 A change of use or new build proposal will not be acceptable unless adequate on-site car parking facilities are provided. Car parking provision should normally meet the following standards:- One car parking space for every five old people

resident in the house. **Plus** one car parking space for every three non-resident staff. **Plus** one space reserved for visiting doctor.

9.3 Car parking areas should not be located in prominent public locations. Where this is not possible, then prominently located car parking areas may be acceptable if adequate landscaping and screening is carried out.

9.4 Homes for the elderly must also provide adequate vehicular access to the site and allow for the manoeuvring of vehicles (such as visiting cars, ambulances, delivery vehicles, fire engines etc.) within the site.

10. Access

10.1 Applicants will be expected to provide adequate means of access into a Home to cater for the needs of the disabled people. Premises which are incapable of adaptation to accommodate wheelchairs at ground floor level are unacceptable.

11. Further Advice

11.1 If you need further advice or guidance about this note please contact us:

Contact

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