



Press Release

29 May 2014

## **Planning Permission approved for 50 Churchill Retirement Living apartments at Farnham Police Station, Farnham.**

Retirement lifestyle specialist Churchill Retirement Living is pleased to announce that planning permission has just been granted by Waverley Borough Council for a 50 one and two bedroom retirement housing development, including communal features, access, car parking and landscaping at the site of the former Farnham Police Station, Long Bridge, Farnham, Surrey. The sheltered housing development for older people will improve the appearance of the site and will positively contribute to the vitality and viability of the area through the creation of a high quality development.

In February 2014 Churchill Retirement Living resubmitted a planning application to provide 50 sheltered/retirement living apartments following a Planning Inspector's appeal decision in November 2013 dismissing an appeal for insufficient Affordable Housing provision.

The development seeks to meet the requirements of Farnham's ageing population, and to preserve the current 'heritage features' of Farnham Police Station. The design of the proposal was considered to "... positively enhance the character and appearance of the Farnham Conservation Area and would not conflict with the heritage protection objectives of Local Plan policies D1, D4, HE3 and HE8 or those in the National Planning Policy Framework."

## **THE KEY BENEFITS**

- Delivery of 50 retirement living apartments, meeting existing and future need
- Provides elderly residents with safety, security and companionship
- Benefits the 'basket shopping economy' as its central location encourages residents to shop locally
- Provides an attractive, bespoke building which will complement the existing streetscape in Farnham and be visually pleasing from the nearby Gostrey Meadows
- Preserves the clock tower and murals which form key heritage features in central Farnham
- Helps fulfil Waverley Council's duty to provide a five-year supply of land for housing and secures a New Homes Bonus of £470,748.00 (6 years x £1,569.16 average band D council tax x 50 units)
- Creates efficiencies by allowing Health and Social Services practitioners to visit several residents at once, leading to a more effective use of public resources.
- Discourages the use of private vehicles through its sustainable location close to the town centre.
- Provision of offsite Affordable Housing.

## **THE SITE**

Farnham Police Station is situated in central Farnham, just to the south of the town centre, and opposite Gostrey Meadows recreation ground. It is s within the boundary of the defined town centre area and the Farnham Conservation Area. Surrey Police took the decision to sell Farnham Police Station as part of a wider estate restructuring and rationalisation programme. The site is ideally suited to sheltered accommodation as it is within easy walking distance of the local amenities likely to be needed by elderly residents; these include supermarkets, shops, restaurants, and venues for entertainment.

## THE NEED FOR SHELTERED ACCOMMODATION

- National Planning Guidance in the NPPF recognises Local Planning Authorities should plan for “*a mix of housing based on current and future demographic trends, market trends and the needs of different groups in the community (such as but not limited to, families with children, older people, people with disabilities...)*” [Paragraph 50]
- The 2011 Census shows the over-65 age group is the fastest growing in the country: currently 1 in 6 people in England and Wales are over 65 years of age.
- The majority of the elderly population are owner-occupiers living in properties which no longer meet their housing needs.
- At the same time, as the average household size decreases, the under-occupation and under-utilisation of properties is posing a real obstacle to housing delivery.
- Sheltered accommodation meets the unique needs of elderly residents, thereby freeing up larger properties for use by growing families, assisting the Council in ensuring there is an adequate housing supply for people of all ages.

There is a massive need for private sheltered housing in the Farnham area. The proposed development of 50 units will increase access to private sheltered housing for local residents. The provision of affordable sheltered housing for rent and shared ownership by social providers of 781 units is 53% of all sheltered stock in the Borough, yet only 13% of the population live in social rent. One in eight social tenants of all ages could gain access to sheltered stock.

There are only 683 units currently built for sale in the private sector to meet the needs of almost 39,524 owner-occupiers who are 78% of all households. There are already social sheltered units to house one in every 8 tenant households, compared to one sheltered housing unit for every 58 owner occupier households. Social housing tenants are over seven times more likely to be able to gain access to sheltered housing than owner occupier households in the private sector. 87% of all households live in the private sector but there is evidence of only eight units of the existing private sheltered housing stock of 683 units, currently available for sale. There is therefore a significant level of unmet market demand for private sheltered housing.

It is a core government policy objective to make best use of the existing stock. The 2009 Housing Needs & Market Assessment for Waverley identifies that 45.3% of all households in Waverley, 22,056 households are under occupied by the bedroom standard. 49% of those with no mortgage live in detached properties which sell at an average price of £626,333 and 53% of owner occupiers with no mortgage are aged over 65.

The impact of under-occupation is significant, and will worsen as the proportion of older people in the population increases, both now and in the long term. There are clearly a large proportion of households with significant equity and the financial ability to trade down into sheltered housing if it was available locally.

Andrew Burgess, Churchill Retirement Living's Planning Director, says:

“There is a massive need for private sheltered housing in the Farnham area. The proposed development of 50 units will increase access to private sheltered housing for local residents. “

As well as meeting the need for high-quality retirement apartments, the development will bring benefits to the local economy in Farnham. Owners will be within walking distance of many amenities such as shops and restaurants, and people in this age group tend to prefer local shopping rather than the large supermarkets. When older people sell their homes – often quite large properties – they release these family-sized houses back onto the market, meeting another local need.

Andrew Burgess, Director of Churchill Retirement Living comments:

“The site is located close to the shops and amenities of Farnham town centre and is well served by public transport and provides sufficient parking. We followed the guidance in the Planning Inspector's decision of November 2013 which accepted the principle of this scheme and accepted that the design would positively enhance the character and appearance of the Farnham Conservation Area. We have engaged in negotiations with the Council to agree the Affordable Housing provision.

Andrew Burgess concludes,

“Churchill Retirement Living has listened to local people and has shown a true commitment to providing a development which is of the highest quality for such a sensitive location. Just some of the benefits of the development are;

- An onsite and prominent location for a statue of local hero William Cobbett.
- Relocation of the clock tower and murals to meet local wishes and putting huge importance on the aesthetics of this sensitive site.
- Help with the town centre’s safety and security by allowing CCTV cameras to operate on the new building.
- Offer a location for the Town’s Christmas tree to be located onsite ensuring the centre of Farnham gets into the festive spirit.
- Improving the eight parking spaces outside the Police Station on Long Bridge, making them more suitable for such a sensitive location.
- Three additional parking spaces within the development itself above the Council standards.

I am very pleased that Councillors and local people supported our latest planning application so that we can start construction soon and bring much needed housing for older people to Farnham.”

When built, the new development will follow the same highly successful pattern of all Churchill lodges, providing high-quality, self-contained homes in landscaped grounds. Owners have the benefits of a Lodge Manager, 24 hour Careline, Owners’ Lounge, guest suite and laundry room. It is a lifestyle that is becoming increasingly sought after by people of retirement age, who enjoy freedom from household and gardening maintenance, and have the benefit of built-in sociability whilst still retaining their independence and privacy.

For more information on Churchill Retirement Living, please call 0800 458 1856 or visit [www.churchillretirement.co.uk](http://www.churchillretirement.co.uk)

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**Images of the proposed Churchill Retirement Living development at Farnham Police Station.**



