



Press Release

21 February 2014

Planning Application Re-Submitted for Churchill Retirement Living apartments at Farnham Police Station, Farnham.

Following a Planning Inspector's appeal decision in November 2013 dismissing an appeal for insufficient Affordable Housing provision, Churchill Retirement Living have today (21 February) resubmitted a planning application to provide 50 sheltered/retirement living apartments on the site of the former Farnham Police Station. 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 by the Planning Inspector last November and he concluded "that the proposed building would 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."

An application has been submitted by Planning Issues on behalf of CRL to Waverley Borough Council and is expected to be determined by early May.

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 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
- Gives local entrepreneurs the opportunity to expand their business by offering services in the 'Wellbeing Suite'
- 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.
- A financial contribution of £413,000 towards 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. The site is 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.

THE RESIDENTIAL PROPOSAL

- CRL’s current proposals include provision for 50 residential ‘sheltered accommodation’ properties; of which there will be 33 1-bed apartments and 17 2-bed.
- The relationship between the site and the neighbouring buildings has been sensitively considered in producing the design, resulting in plans that respect both the built and natural environment.
- Further, the design provides a pleasant and safe environment for the prospective residents as well as making a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the local area.

COMMUNAL FACILITIES

The site design has taken into account a number of communal facilities designed specifically with the needs of residents in mind. These include:

- A resident lodge manager employed by the Millstream Management Company to provide assistance and security for the owners of apartments. They are also in charge of day to day maintenance.

- An owners' lounge for use by residents and their guests, including a small kitchen area. This encourages friendships between residents, stimulating their sense of well-being.
- A treatment room for residents requiring physiotherapy, chiropractic or medical examinations.
- A guest suite for the relatives or friends of owners who wish to stay overnight
- A communal landscaped garden area which is maintained by the Management Company
- A safe, covered area for housing and recharging battery buggies
- 20 car parking spaces.

SUSTAINABILITY

The site is located just south of the town's central shopping area and has excellent access to all major facilities. It is in walking distance to the rail station and is served by nearby bus services. It is a highly sustainable location and one which will encourage the use of available pedestrian routes. This fits with the experience of CRL; that the majority of residents sell their cars shortly after moving into sheltered accommodation.

ACCESS

Vehicular access will remain via Long Bridge, but will be moved further south in keeping with the proposed layout of the development. The existing public car parking spaces on Long Bridge will be retained, but will be relocated slightly to the north to maximise visibility at the new entrance point. The application is supported by a comprehensive Planning, Design & Access statement which seeks to full address issues of concern.

Subject to planning consent being achieved the redevelopment is scheduled for completion in 2015.

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. The Housing Needs Survey carried out in 2000 showed a potential demand of 387 units a year of warden assisted private housing for older people. Since the publication of this report only 2 schemes were built, one in 2002 of 20 units and one in 2003 also for 20 units. Only 40 private sheltered units have therefore been delivered since 1988 in the Borough which means there is a massive shortfall of private older peoples housing in the Waverley Borough Council area.

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 have 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 recently engaged in pre-application discussions with the Council to agree the Affordable Housing provision and propose a financial contribution of £413,000."

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;

- Provide an onsite and prominent location for a statue of local hero William Cobbett, including a generous donation to help in the statue’s construction.
- 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 hope that Councillors and local people will support our latest planning application so that we can start construction soon.”

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

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

