### Application Details

**Application No:** 13/02519/COU

**Proposal:** Change of use of redundant mental health care building to hostel

**Site Address:** Woodlands Lodge, Dene Park House, Dene Park, Hexham, Northumberland

**Applicant:** Mr Kevin Newbould, Northumberland County Council Morpeth NE61 2EL

**Agent:** None

**Valid Date:** 5 September 2013

**Expire Date:** 31 October 2013

**Case Officer Details:**
- **Name:** Mrs Tamsin Wood
- **Job Title:** Senior Planning Officer
- **Tel No:** 01670 625545
- **Email:** tamsin.wood@northumberland.gov.uk

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1. **Introduction**

1.1 The application site is on land which Northumberland County Council owns and has been submitted by the County Council. As such under the Council’s Scheme of Delegation the application falls to be considered by the relevant Area Planning Committee.

2. **Description of the Proposals**

2.1 Planning permission is sought for the change of use of a former mental health care building to a hostel to be used by people who have short term homeless needs. The application site forms part of the Dene Park House and Hexham Priory School complex of buildings in Hexham’s East End. The proposed facilities would be run by Northumberland County Council. The proposal is for the change of use of the building and for largely internal works to facilitate the conversion. Internally, works would be carried out to provide an additional bedroom so creating 9 bedrooms in total, with other rooms used as a dining / lounge area, double kitchen, office, bathroom and WC, shower room and laundry room.

2.2 The applicant’s agent advises that there will be no direct care although Northumberland County Council staff may call in at times during the day and would also be contactable by telephone.

2.3 The application site is a red-brick single storey former mental health care home, with vehicular access obtained from White Cross, and pedestrian access from Corbridge Road. The vehicular access is shared with Hexham Priory School and Dene Park House. Dene Park House adjoins Woodlands Lodge directly to the east and recently obtained planning permission for the change of use from care home to office space for Northumberland County Council and Northumbria Healthcare. To the east of the site are residential properties in White Cross.

2.4 The site is within the built up area of Hexham.

3. **Planning History**

**Reference Number:** 13/00096/FUL (Dene Park House which adjoins the site to the east)  
**Description:** Change of use from a care home to office space for Northumberland County Council & Northumbria Healthcare  
**Status:** Approved

4. **Consultee Responses**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Public Protection</th>
<th>Comments: No response received.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hexham Town Council</td>
<td>Comments: No response received.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highways</td>
<td>Comments: No objections to the proposal.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. **Public Responses**
Neighbour Notification

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Neighbours Notified</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of Objections</td>
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<tr>
<td>Number of Support</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of General Comments</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Notices
General site notice, 30\textsuperscript{th} September 2013 to 21\textsuperscript{st} October 2013.
No Press Notice Required.

Summary of Responses:
None received.

6. \textbf{Planning Policy}

6.1 \textbf{National Planning Policy}
National Planning Policy Framework (27\textsuperscript{th} March 2012)

6.2 \textbf{Development Plan Policy}

Tynedale Core Strategy (October 2007)
GD1 Locational policy setting out settlement hierarchy
BE1 Principles for the Built Environment
EDT1 Principles for economic development

Tynedale Local Plan (adopted April 2000 saved Policies October 2007)
GD2 Design Criteria for development, including extensions and alterations
GD4 Range of transport provision for all development
GD7 Car parking standards within the built up areas of Hexham, Haltwhistle, Prudhoe and Corbridge
ED11 Small scale opportunities from new sites, redevelopment or conversions

7. \textbf{Appraisal}

7.1 The main issues for consideration in the determination of this application are:-

- Principle of Development
- Design
- Amenity
- Highways Matters

7.2 The application site is located within the built up area of Hexham which Core Strategy Policy GD1 recognises as a main town and therefore a focus for development. The principle of developing the site for the new hostel would therefore accord with the general provisions of Core Strategy Policy GD1. As the change of use from vacant care home into a hostel would also provide employment for the wardens that come to the site, it is also considered the proposal would accord with Core Strategy Policy EDT1, which seeks to support a buoyant and diverse local economy and Local Plan Policy ED11 which allows small scale employment generating enterprises through the
provisions of new sites by conversions within existing settlements subject to certain criteria being met.

7.3 Given the scheme would also involve the change of use of an existing building within a main town this would also accord with one of the main principles of the NPPF which is to encourage sustainable development. The NPPF also notes that when considering proposals for sites in edge of centre locations, preference should be given to accessible sites well connected to the town centre. The site is within walking distance of the town centre and on / in close proximity to a number of bus routes serving various parts of the town, its hinterland villages and destinations further a field in the form of Carlisle and Newcastle. In this sense, the site is highly accessible. The scheme would also provide an accessible local service that reflects the community’s needs and supports its health, social and cultural well-being. Thus it would help contribute towards the social dimension of sustainable development, under paragraph 7 of the NPPF.

Design

7.4 The majority of the works are internal, with the only external change being the blocking up of one doorway on the eastern elevation of bedroom 9, which faces Dene Park House. This would not be visible from wider views outside the site, and therefore would accord with Core Strategy Policy BE1 and Local Plan Policy GD2 with respect to design.

Amenity

7.5 The building exists at present and there are no further openings or extensions proposed. The proposal would not therefore significantly or adversely impact upon the residential amenities enjoyed by the occupiers of the properties adjacent in White Cross, or impact upon the adjacent school building, in terms of loss of light or outlook. Given the building is also single storey, there is only one door to a corridor on the western elevation of the property and there are high boundary treatments in the form of fences and hedges with the residential properties at Whitecross, which obscure views, it is also considered the proposal would not impact upon the residential amenity of these neighbouring occupants in terms of loss of privacy.

7.6 In terms of the proposed use of the site, as only 9 bedrooms are proposed within the building and the use will be residential in nature as sleeping accommodation will be provided for people with short terms homeless needs, it is considered that any noise associated with the new use should not be significant and not have a detrimental impact upon the amenity of adjacent residents. In any case where it is deemed that someone is creating unacceptable noise levels, this would be controlled by the Northumberland County Council Rural Reactive Team, under the Environmental Protection Act 1990. The comments of public protection have also been sought in respect to the proposed use. In respect to impact upon amenity, and subject to the comments of public protection it is considered the proposal would accord with the provisions of Core Strategy Policy BE1 and Local Plan Policy GD2, in terms of impact upon residential amenity.

Highways Matters
7.7 The application does not include any alterations to the pedestrian and vehicular access and no parking is included within the application site, although there is parking to the front of the site. The Highway Authority have been consulted however and have confirmed that both the existing and proposed use attract similar amounts and type of vehicular movements. Thus it is considered that the change of use would not adversely affect the highway and it will not have a detrimental impact on highway safety in the area. The Highway Authority therefore have no objection to this proposal. The site is also located within Hexham where there is good access to public transport routes and public parking is available in close proximity. It is therefore considered the proposal would accord with Local Plan Policies GD4 and GD7 with regard to parking and access.

8. Conclusion

8.1 The principle of the proposed development accords with Core Strategy Policies GD1 and EDT1 and Local Plan Policy ED11. It also accords with one of the main principles of the NPPF which is to encourage sustainable development. The design is acceptable and in accordance with Core Strategy Policy BE1 and Local Plan Policy GD2. In respect to impact upon amenity, and subject to the comments of public protection it is considered the proposal would accord with the provisions of Core Strategy Policy BE1 and Local Plan Policy GD2, in terms of impact upon residential amenity. The proposal would accord with Local Plan Policies GD4 and GD7 with regard to parking and access.

9. Recommendation

Authority to the Head of Development Services to GRANT conditional planning permission subject to no new material planning issues being raised within the consultation and notification period and subject to the following conditions:

Conditions/Reason

01. The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.

Reason: To comply with Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended)

02. The development hereby permitted shall not be carried out otherwise than in complete accordance with the approved plans. The approved plans for this development are:-

1. Woodland Lodge DPH- Proposal 02.04.13/ KN

Reason: To ensure that the approved development is carried out in complete accordance with the approved plans.
3. Notwithstanding all the details shown on the approved plans, those openings which are to be blocked up shall be blocked up with materials to match that on those on the walls directly adjacent.

Reason: In the interests of the satisfactory appearance of the development upon completion and in accordance with the provisions of Core Strategy Policy BE1 and Local Plan Policy GD2.

Date of Report:  
Background Papers: Planning application file(s) 13/02519/COU