

19/00500/FUL, Duke's School Alnwick

Good afternoon – as the applicant I represent Northumberland Estates and am speaking in support of the proposed development at the former Duke's School in Alnwick.

The proposed development includes the conversion and restoration of the Grade II Listed Duke's School, which has been vacant since 2016, to residential apartments. The application also includes the development of specialist elderly accommodation and 22 residential dwellings in the south of the site. In the remainder of the former school grounds, it is proposed to create an area of publicly accessible open parkland totalling around 5 acres in size.

Development of the site for these uses has numerous benefits:

1. The creation of a wide range of new housing including apartments, 2 and 3-bed houses and bungalows, specialist elderly accommodation and affordable housing. All of these housing types and tenures meet important needs within the town.
2. The restoration of a vacant Grade II Listed Building, which is currently falling into a state of disrepair. The building is an important historical asset to the town and its restoration will enable the building to be fully appreciated. The building has now been empty for over four years and will deteriorate further unless it is brought back into a beneficial use as proposed. Overall, significant heritage benefits will be delivered for the town.
3. The creation of a new public parkland, which will enable new viewpoints of the restored Listed Building, as well as providing a significant area of public open space, in comparison to the existing site which is inaccessible to the public and would remain private due to safety and security concerns if this development does not go ahead. The development includes a Landscape Management Plan that will secure the long-term maintenance and management of this space,

including the retained boundary tree planting. This is a major gain for the community and a significant improvement to the existing state of the site.

4. Although the former school playing fields have not been in use since 2016, and the development will not displace any current sporting use, it has been agreed to provide 2.74 hectares of additional playing pitches adjacent to the existing sport facilities in the south of Alnwick. This is a further major gain for the town.
5. The Alnwick and Denwick Neighbourhood Plan was made in July 2017, and specifically allocated this site for development. The development accords with the Neighbourhood Plan's vision and planning policies, and is therefore supported in principle by the local community which made the plan. The very special circumstances policy test is met through heritage benefits, landscape and open space benefits, additional playing pitch provision, and the delivery of a range of housing including affordable housing. Moreover, the proposed development provides the best design solution as agreed with Planning and Conservation Officers.
6. The development also secures significant planning obligations towards health care, education and coastal mitigation. These have all been agreed with Council Officers in a completed S106 agreement.

In conclusion, the Planning Officer has concluded that the benefits of the proposal and the development complies with the planning policy of the Local Development Plan. It is respectfully requested that the Committee consider the benefits and opportunity that this development would bring, and agree with the Planning Officer that this application is a good outcome for the new use of the site and should be supported.

Thank you.