

Churchill Retirement Homes at Belle Vue Observations and Objections

30 December 2021

These objections follow an earlier response made directly to Churchill Retirement Living at the time of the public exhibition on October 15 2021. The key points were as follows:

1. We fully supported the proposals for the development of Belle Vue House.
2. We challenged the designs for the retirement homes block on the grounds that:
 - a. it is too large for the site to accommodate, given the proximity of Belle Vue House
 - b. it presents a poor addition to the townscape when viewed from the Conservation Area
 - c. the architects confessed no knowledge of Sudbury's brickmaking history and had merely proposed an adaptation of schemes from elsewhere in Churchill's portfolio
 - d. the density (42 units) combined with the required parking would leave little outdoor space for residents (the developers said a scheme 35 units was still viable)
 - e. the lack of direct access for residents to Belle Vue Park was an absurdity,

In the Churchill Homes Planning Application, now lodged, we cannot see any reflection of these comments, nor have we received any response to them from the developer. Unless we have missed something, the Application is a direct lift, unchanged from the scheme as presented at the exhibition. We therefore wish to restate these OBJECTIONS to the scheme as presented.

1. The Site

Churchill have developed over 100 retirement properties across the country, many of which have architectural merit. This is not one of them. They have a corner site, visible from three compass points, but have completely failed to take advantage of it. Overleaf can be seen three others where they exploit their corner location successfully with a landmark feature. There is no landmark of any description in this scheme. What could form an eye-catching building marking the approach to the town's Conservation Area (left) will just be a triple-banked 4-storey mass (right). It could be anywhere, and is just not good enough for Sudbury, where Gainsborough's House sets the kind of example we need.



2. Design details

As mentioned in our previous comments, there is no use of textured bricks, both reds and whites, which are manufactured locally. There is reference instead in the specifications to "painted bricks", a totally unacceptable substitute. And then there are those chimneys. Yes, they are obviously a nod to the chimneys on the nearby Belle Vue House, but they are **fake** - and worse than fake: they will need to be made of lightweight materials such as plastic and fibreglass otherwise stronger roof supports will be needed for 'genuine' brick chimneys. The irony of pretend chimneys, when open fires are now damned for their contribution to global warming!

In conclusion we recommend that this application be rejected on grounds of scale, visual impact and use of materials, making no attempt to reflect any local vernacular on this prominent site.

3. Comparisons with other Churchill developments

In the four examples below, Churchill's architects have followed a very similar, safe style incorporating red brick with the occasional white rendered panel under pitched tile roofs with minimal detailing.



Highcliffe, Dorset

In these examples the architects have taken full advantage of three corner sites, which they have failed to do at Sudbury. The 4th example is included to show how stone or flint panels can be used to vary a brick façade.



Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk



Leatherhead, Surrey



Peacehaven, E. Sussex



Sittingbourne, Kent



Aylesbury, Bucks



Walton on Thames, Surrey (somewhat better detailing)



Littlehampton, W. Sussex (much better detailing)

Sam Thornton, Chairman

S.A. Hata.