

Cabinet decision, 11 December 2024: Office to residential conversions to accommodate homeless families – Chesham House – Grounds for Call-in and Responses from Living Well officers

1. As the site has been rejected for residential conversion once, I am concerned as to whether we will be able to deliver lawful and practical accommodation in the same building.
2. Suitable nature of accommodation. A previous planning application for the site, converting it to flats, was rejected.

Response to grounds 1 and 2

- I can confirm the reasons for refusal previously:
 1. the property wasn't classified as Class E
 2. the flats didn't comply with NDSS (national described space standards)
 3. Section drawings were absent.
 4. Noise survey was taken at the wrong times.
 - Lawful Development Certificate from June 2024 that allows Permitted Development change of use to Flats
 - The 55 units that we are to develop are NDSS compliant, with correct amenity, bike storage etc. for planning + LB Havering requirements for office/ community and other amenity spaces.
 - Architects determined ceiling heights aren't an issue the elevation drawings are available to demonstrate.
 - 3 surveys will be required to support the application. First a correct Noise survey with additional Flood Risk survey and Highways survey.
3. I am concerned at the lack of detail with regards to whether these will be self-contained units or offer some form of communal/shared facility.

Response to ground 3

- Yes, each of the units are self-contained.
- Communal facilities will also reflect what has been provided at Royal Jubilee Court to allow families to get the support they need and children to have an active space to utilise.

4. I would like more information about any on-site security and/or support being provided.

Response to ground 4

- We will provide onsite support from our hostels team with an identical model to Royal Jubilee Court. Residents will receive all relevant support from on-site staff about their housing options.

Response to ground 5

5. I am concerned as to whether the building can be made suitably fire-safe.
- Yes, the conversion will be subject to approval by Building Control.

Response to ground 6

6. There should be a value for money assessment. Would it be cheaper and faster to procure homes on the open market?
- The Council will not be taking on the financial risk of purchasing or renovating the building but will be holding the National Housing Group to detailed standards. If this is not met we will not be entering into a deal with them.
 - The exempt housing benefit income likely to be achieved with this building means that this model is significantly cheaper than procuring homes on the open market.
 - The comparison between buying homes on the market
 - No capital outlay for the purchase of a property
 - No capital expenditure for the renovation of a property.
 - Purchasing homes for the general fund will be subject to the local housing allowance 2011 less 10%. Whereas we are seeking exemption from this rent level with Chesham House so that we are able to meet all our costs.