

Conversion of an education building to residential apartments

Queensmere House,
49 Queen's Road,
East Grinstead,
West Sussex,
RH19 1BF

STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

for

RH19 Estates Ltd

December 2024



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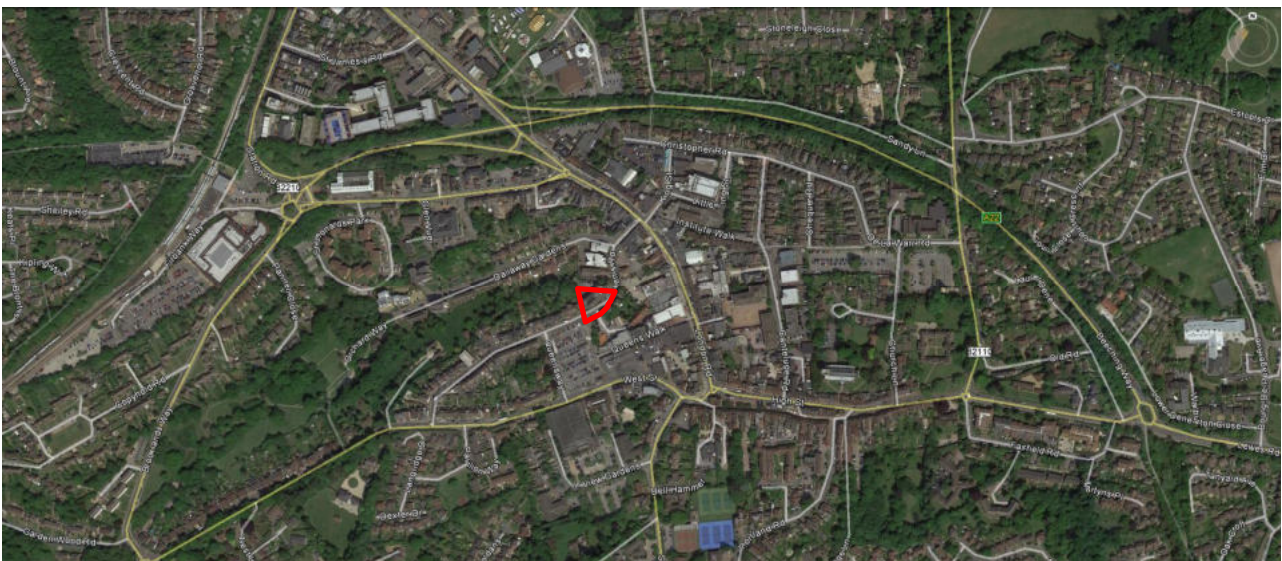
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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) has been prepared to support a Planning Application for the conversion of a vacant educational building into 24 high-quality residential apartments with associated parking and landscaped amenity spaces. The following report has been prepared on behalf of our client, RH19 Estates Ltd.
- 1.2 The application aims to address local housing demand by providing modern and sustainable living accommodation. The proposed scheme includes a mix of 17no. 1-bedroom apartments, 6no. 2-bedroom apartments, and 1no. 3-bedroom apartments, designed to cater to a variety of residents, looking to live in an apartment living within close proximity to East Grinstead town centre.
- 1.3 This SCI outlines the methods of consultation undertaken and presents feedback received from the public, Mid Sussex District Council, and East Grinstead Town Council. It also demonstrates how the consultation process has influenced and shaped the development proposals, ensuring alignment with community expectations and local planning policies.
- 1.4 This document should be read in conjunction with the accompanying Design and Access Statement. Together, these reports provide a comprehensive overview of the proposed development, including the site's planning history, policy framework, and the design rationale behind the scheme.



Aerial photo: site identified in red.

2.0 Form of development

2.1 The proposed scheme involves the conversion of a vacant D1 educational building into 24 residential apartments, with enhancements to the existing structure. The development includes a modest infill of undercroft areas and external improvements such as façade treatments and landscaping. Key features of the proposal include:

- 15no. off-street carparking spaces (reduced from 42 to promote sustainable living).
- 24 secure cycle spaces to encourage alternative modes of transport.
- New crossover and access points, with the existing crossover reinstated as pavement for improved pedestrian safety.
- Private and communal amenity areas with soft landscaping and native planting to enhance biodiversity.
- 1.1m high metal fencing and planting facing Queens Road
- A new ramp providing step-free access to the parking area.

The development provides the following accommodation:

- 3no. 1 bed 1 person Studio apartments
- 14no. 1 bed 2 person apartments
- 3no. 2 bed 3 person apartments
- 3no. 2 bed 4 person apartments
- 1no. 3 bed 5 person apartment

24 apartments total

The scheme reflects a careful design approach to optimize internal layouts and improve the building's environmental performance, while aligning with planning and community objectives.

3.0 Site Description

3.1 The site spans approximately 1573.5 sq m (0.157 hectares) and is currently occupied by a vacant, four-storey building previously used as an educational facility.

3.2 The site comprises an irregularly shaped plot containing a substantial building, erected in the 1980s, with a car park to the rear. Over its history, the building has served as an office block, a church, and an educational facility. Prior to the 1980s, the site was home to a Cottage Hospital dating back to the 1930s.

3.3 The existing building, constructed in the 1980s, is of brick external leaf, concrete framed building with large windows on the ground and first floors. The first floor features a tiled mono-pitch roof, while the second floor is set back and capped with a similar mono-pitch tiled roof. Access to the building is via a glazed entrance on Queens Road, with vehicular access provided through a ramp leading to an undercroft parking area at the rear.

3.4 The site is located along Queens Road, which forms its southern boundary. Opposite the site are residential properties and car parks servicing retail and commercial establishments on Queens Walk and London Road. On the site opposite the site a new building comprising 129 residential apartments and retail uses at ground level

has been built, highlighting the areas transition to a mixed use area.

- 3.5 To the east of the site lies the vehicular access to the rear, marked by a mixture of boundary treatments including metal hoarding, metal heras fencing and green painted palisade fences. Adjacent to the site is a single storey building with a large, pitched roof, currently operating as a social club (Literary and Social Institution). Beyond this is a split-level, four-storey residential development comprising 9 one-bedroom flats and 11 two-bedroom flats, with associated parking for 9 cars.
- 3.6 The western boundary is delineated by a close-board timber fence and overgrowth. Beyond this are nos. 51-57 Queen's Road, a row of Victorian terrace houses. Opposite the site is the Mid Sussex Queensway Car Park, serving nearby retail and residential developments.
- 3.7 At the rear/north of the site, 42 car parking spaces are currently provided. This area is entirely surfaced with tarmac and lacks landscaping, apart from overgrown hedging along the sides. The northern corner of the site features a cluster of established trees, contributing some greenery to the otherwise paved area. The site slopes towards the rear, creating an undercroft parking area beneath the building.

4.0 Pre-application Consultation

- 4.1 A pre-application meeting was held on site with the Case Officer (Andy Watt) and Mid Sussex Council Tree Officer (Irene Felcher). A scheme was presented proposing 25 residential apartments within the existing building, incorporating infill of undercroft areas and external enhancements. The proposal includes 15 car parking spaces, landscaped amenity areas, and cycle storage for 26 bicycles to support sustainable living.
- 4.2 The development included a mix of one and two bedroom apartments, designed to exceed minimum space standards and cater to a range of local housing needs.
- 4.3 The application material comprised detailed plans, elevations and a design narrative.
- 4.4 Feedback from the consultation raised the following key points:
- Principle of development: The conversion to residential use is still supported in principle, with a statement justifying the loss of educational use required.
 - Welcomed to bring back a vacant building back into use.
 - Welcomed the principle of improving a somewhat dreary building, make sure that the colours lift up the brickwork.
 - Concern about the living conditions for the proposed lower ground floor flats where two of them will be lit solely by lightwells- suggestion to remove the corridor and create dual aspect units.
 - A development of 25 x 1 and 2 bed flats, which gives rise to a minimum on-site affordable housing requirement of 30% in accordance with District Plan Policy DP31. This equates to 8 affordable housing units since the resultant number of affordable housing units.
 - The proposed housing mix, subject to the reconfiguration of the lower ground floor units (set out above) and compliance with the National Space Standards, is not likely to be contentious.
 - Impact on Trees: No objection – the site would benefit from further landscaping, particularly around the boundaries.
 - Suitable EV Charging infrastructure should be incorporated.
 - A drainage and Flood Risk mitigation plan should form part of the application.

- Scheme should look to meet BNG Targets.
- Ashdown Forest concerns: Proposal has potential to increase the number of traffic movements and may have an adverse impact on the amount of nitrogen dioxide pollution deposited.

5.0 Public Consultation

5.1 The public consultation was conducted via a leaflet mail drop to residents along Queens Road, Dallaway Gardens, and neighbouring areas. The leaflet included comprehensive details of the proposed development, including site plans and visualisations of the enhanced building façade and landscaping (see Figure 1). This approach aimed to ensure local stakeholders were informed and had an opportunity to provide feedback on the proposal.

HAVE YOUR SAY

QUEENSMERE HOUSE

A vibrant residential revival breathing new life into Queen's Road, East Grinstead.

NEXT STEPS

In the next few weeks the team will be developing their proposals taking into consideration any comments from the local community.

Following this we will be submitting a full planning application to Mid Sussex District Council. We aim to submit the application in Autumn/ Winter 2024.

Share Your Thoughts...

Please contact us at:

willianb@atpgroup.co.uk

Proposal Summary:

The Queensmere House transformation will create a high-quality residential development of 24 modern apartments, designed to meet National Space Standards and contemporary environmental regulations.

Enhancements to the building's frontage on Queen's Road will create a more welcoming, pedestrian-friendly streetscape, while sustainable landscaping with native planting will support local biodiversity and contribute to an attractive living environment.

Thoughtfully aligned with the character of East Grinstead, this project will bring new life to a long-vacant site, fostering community vitality and supporting the regeneration of Queen's Road.



We're excited to propose the transformation of Queensmere House on Queen's Road, East Grinstead, into 24 modern apartments. Previously an office and later used by Central Sussex College, the building is well-suited for residential conversion, given its excellent location near East Grinstead Station and town amenities.



Our plan preserves the building's brick exterior and introduces sustainable landscaping, ensuring a harmonious addition that respects the surrounding residential and community spaces.

Before we submit our planning application, we would like to share our plans with you and hear your feedback.

Location Plan

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME

DESIGN CONCEPT



Regenerating Queen's Road
Transforming a disused educational building, Queensmere House will add high-quality residences to the heart of East Grinstead, supporting the area's revitalisation and encouraging a vibrant, sustainable community.

Building Massing
The building respects the scale of Queen's Road, maintaining its height and incorporating shared green spaces for residents. Its design blends seamlessly with the surrounding streetscape.

Public Realm
Queensmere House enhances Queen's Road with a green, welcoming frontage in East Grinstead's town center. Native hedges and wildflowers support bees and butterflies, while new trees offer shade, improve air quality, and create wildlife habitats. This eco-friendly landscape boosts biodiversity, adding visual appeal and fostering a community connection to nature for a healthier environment.

Key Benefits of the Proposal:
This development will bring significant benefits to the local area, including:

- Redevelopment of a vacant office building
- 24 new residential units, providing a mixture of one, two and three bedroom apartments
- 15 car parking spaces and 24 cycle spaces
- Private amenity spaces for residents
- Enhanced local landscape and biodiversity
- Improved connectivity and accessibility to the town center

DESIGN APPROACH

The design enhances the area's character through a traditional building form and a high-quality material palette, including powder-coated aluminum windows, modern slate tiles, and durable cladding. These elements contribute to a contemporary aesthetic while respecting the local context.

New entrance doors with canopies and replacement bay windows with a vertical emphasis will enhance the street façade. Additionally, the infill of the undercroft parking area and small rear extensions will feature high-quality brickwork that complements the existing structure.

This development increases housing supply and positively impacts Queen's Road, fostering community vibrancy. The thoughtful selection of materials ensures compatibility with the surrounding area, enhancing the local environment.



Front Elevation

The redevelopment of Queensmere House revitalises an underutilised structure, transforming it into a thoughtfully crafted residential space that complements East Grinstead's architectural fabric. The design updates establish harmony with the surroundings, integrating seamlessly while creating a welcoming environment for residents. This project enriches Queen's Road by expanding housing options and enhancing the streetscape with a refreshed, cohesive aesthetic that aligns with community values.

Figure 1 - Public consultation leaflet

5.2 Residents were invited to share their feedback, concerns, or queries regarding the proposed development. This was facilitated through email correspondence. To date, only four responses have been received, indicating limited engagement from the local community.

6.0 Public Response

6.1 Following the mail drop, four residents responded to the consultation. All comments received during the pre-application consultation and community engagement process have been carefully reviewed and addressed by the Design Team (email responses are in Appendix A).

6.2 Out of the four respondents two showed their support for the scheme, two were concerned about parking levels and one was concerned about Bats, Badgers and wildlife.

6.3 Parking Levels – Concern has been raised by two neighbours regarding the level of parking due to 24 apartments and only 15 car parking spaces. The site is situated in a sustainable location being a 10minute walk from East Grinstead Station and in the town centre close to all local amenities. This will reduce the reliance on residents requiring a car. A managed solution by the property owner will distribute the car parking spaces as required. As part of the application, we are happy for the residents to be restricted from applying for on-street carparking.

6.4 Environmental and Wildlife – Concern has been raised by a neighbour regarding existing Bats and Badgers located in the area. A preliminary ecological assessment (PEA) forms part of this application and has noted there is the potential habitat for Bats, Birds and Hazel Dormice.

As part of a condition for the development a Full Bat survey will need to be conducted in line with the proposal set out in the PEA before any works are carried out. New Bat Boxes will be included on the external walls of the building.

As part of a condition for the development works are to be carried out outside of bird nesting season or before works commence a nesting bird check is conducted. New bird boxes will be included with the development.

For the protection of dormice and removal of scrub and trees on site is to be carried out under a method statement with an ecological clerk of works supervision.

Any other wildlife found during works is to be allowed to flee of their own volition or to be moved to the site boundary. With gaps in fencing created to allow unrestricted access once works are complete.

As the site is within 2km of a stator site and two non-statutory sites of nature conservation value and within the impact risk zone of the Ashdown forest Special Protection Area and Special Area of Conservation a financial contribution to the Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace and the Ashdown Forest Strategic Access management and Monitory strategy is expected and will be agreed as part of the Section 106 agreement.

7.0 Conclusion

- 7.1 There have been no adverse comments received to date objecting to the proposals.
- 7.2 Feedback from residents has been generally complimentary and supportive, highlighting approval of the proposal's thoughtful design and retention of the building's character.
- 7.3 The overall bulk of the development has been significantly reduced compared to previous applications.
- 7.4 In response to concerns about car parking, the design team has reviewed the design but have concluded that 15 spaces is an adequate amount for the mix of units and the sites sustainable location. The approach aligns with sustainable transport goals, reduces car dependency, and mitigates the impact on local highways. The inclusion of secure cycle storage for 24 bicycles further supports alternative transport methods.
- 7.5 Further wildlife surveys are required to be carried out prior to any works commencing on site and as such any impacts will be mitigated.
- 7.5 The proposal has been carefully designed to ensure minimal impact on neighbouring properties. The applicant is committed to maintaining open communication with neighbours throughout the construction phase, providing advance notice of the program and any potential disruptions, such as deliveries or construction activities.
- 7.6 Feedback received during the consultation process has been supportive, with only specific clarifications requested. These clarifications have been addressed by the design team to ensure transparency and alignment with community expectations.
- 7.7 The new development respects the neighbouring properties, existing amenities, and the overall character of the area, delivering a well-considered, sustainable, and attractive scheme for the community.

Appendix A

From: [Doffy Lehner](#)
To: [William Board](#)
Subject: Queensmere Hiuse
Date: 05 December 2024 07:55:26

CAUTION: This email originated from outside the Organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Dear Sir/Madam,

I received your leaflet through my door recently and would like to pass on my total agreement with your proposal. I really like how you have kept the original building which in my opinion is lovely and just enhancing it.

I sincerely hope you get approval and not forced to build or change plans to something garish like across the street.

Yours sincerely
Mrs Lehner
from Dallaway Gardens

Sent from my iPhone

From: [Holly Allen](#)
To: [William Board](#)
Subject: Queensmere House
Date: 05 December 2024 13:53:23

CAUTION: This email originated from outside the Organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

The "long-vacant site" has been the location for numerous bat and badger sightings over the years. How will you mitigate any potential damage or destruction to wildlife habitats?

From: [Pearl Hathaway](#)
To: [William Board](#)
Subject: Queensmere House East Grinstead
Date: 02 December 2024 17:15:04

CAUTION: This email originated from outside the Organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Dear Sir

We have received the proposal for the above.

However you plan 24 new apartments but only 15 car parking spaces.

We live in Dallaway Gardens, due to the development above Super drug with no parking spaces, the parking has become Intolerable.

We pay over £100 to park but have to fight for a space.

Please understand there will be no room to park if your spaces are full.

Regards

Pearl Hathaway

From: [Michaela Bordessoule](#)
To: [William Board](#)
Subject: QUEENSMERE HOUSE
Date: 16 December 2024 11:14:20

CAUTION: This email originated from outside the Organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Good morning,

Redevelopment of QM house is long overdue and it is great that it is going to happen soon. It is a lovely building inside and it is a shame to see it being vandalised on the outside.

The issue which I have with the current proposal is the number of apartments (24) and the number of parking spaces (15).

The street parking spaces around that area are scarce. It is noticeable to see that overnight the Iceland car park is full. The spills of parked cars affect Queens Road, Dallaway Gardens etc. In the morning and in the evening it is impossible to drive in front of the Queensmere House in both directions because the whole side of the road near the QM house is full of parked cars and there is only room for one flow of traffic. Also because of lack of parking in that area, many overnight cars park partially or fully on pavements. This habit prioritizes cars instead of pedestrians.

For this reason, the suggested proposal of 15 parking spaces is not adequate and therefore doesn't have my approval as a whole as an unsustainable project.

Regards,
M. Bordessoule