

Hotel Felix: Redevelopment as an 80 bed care home (C2) – PPSE comments on needs issue

There are several sources of evidence regarding the need for care homes in South Cambridgeshire. The applicant has commissioned a 'Headline Planning Need Statement' study from Carterwood and the Greater Cambridge Shared Planning service has commissioned a 'Housing Needs for Specific Groups' study from GL Hearn as part of the Local Plan review process.

The Headline Planning Needs Statement by the applicant identifies a need for 102 bedspaces by 2024 in South Cambridgeshire. This discounts all current bedspaces that are not en-suite and increases demand to incorporate an occupation capacity allowance. However, it does not consider the situation in Cambridge despite the proposed site being on the border of Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire.

The GL Hearn study found a shortfall of 328 bedspaces in 2020 across Greater Cambridgeshire. Additional demand was estimated using a range of demographic projections. These resulted in a shortfall of bedspaces in 2040 ranging from 1,884 to 2,048. This shortfall can be disaggregated into a shortfall of 215 to 259 in Cambridge and 1,668 to 1,789 in South Cambridgeshire. The shortfall is not profiled across the 20 year period. However, assuming a flat profile would suggest a need for 43 to 52 bedspaces in Cambridge and 334 to 358 bedspaces in South Cambridgeshire in 2024. Allowance would then be required for additional bedspaces likely to be completed by 2024.

The applicants Headline Planning Needs Statement identified 260 such bedspaces in South Cambridgeshire. A new care home with 68 bedspaces was also completed in Cambridge in 2021 (following the demolition of the previous 58 bed care home).

Despite the many differences in methodology and data sources the two studies have produced broadly similar results which suggest a potential shortfall of approximately 100 bedspaces in South Cambridgeshire by 2024.

The county council has undertaken its own analysis which finds a much lower level of need. The discrepancy is due to the county council estimates being strongly led by a proposed change in their commissioning strategy. (Cambridgeshire County Council and Peterborough City Council commission 32 per cent of care beds across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough). As a result, they will be prioritizing supporting people to stay in their own home, or where this is not possible, to retain as much independence as possible through 'housing with care solutions'. The county council want to support the development of a 'mixed market' with a range of housing options including new models. The result is a reduced share of the market for care homes. It should also be noted that the County Council are piloting a new 'Independent Living Service' which it is assumed will support their commissioning strategy and a shift away from care homes towards more independent living options.

The county council project a need for an additional 124 bedspaces in South Cambridgeshire from 2020 to 2036 but consider that as there have already been 210 permitted there is no further need.

The Councils have requested further information from the county council so we can better understand how their estimates relate to the GL Hearn study, in order to inform the local plan. The Councils are

currently in the process of reviewing their Local Plans, and the Greater Cambridge Local Plan will seek to consider and address the range of housing needs including specialist needs. The plan may not be adopted until 2025.