



Planning Potential secured full planning permission for an extension, alterations to existing elevations and wider refurbishment works to a vacant care home to bring the unit into active use as a 30-bed care facility for women.

On behalf of our client, Cygnet Health, Planning Potential secured planning permission by unanimous vote at planning committee for a series of works to an existing vacant healthcare facility, in Oldbury, to provide a specialist residential service for women suffering mental health issues.

As part of a phased approach to planning which included advising, managing and leading a separate prior notification for demolition (PND) application to enable site demolition and remediation works ahead of a formal planning permission, Planning Potential navigated a challenging determination process which generated considerable local and political opposition requiring sensitive, comprehensive and robust responses to all interested parties. This included addressing negative and defamatory comments from the local community, which highlighted the unfortunate and common misconceptions that surround mental health.

By working closely with the applicant and Local Planning Authority, we prepared an Operational Statement to demonstrate why the proposed operation fell within Use Class C2 (residential) and not C2A (secure institution) and did not constitute a material change of use. We also successfully addressed concerns regarding perceived impact on neighbouring amenity through the preparation of a technical note, and helped to coordinate and attend a consultation event with residents and stakeholders.

The result was an officer recommendation to approve with no pre-commencement conditions - the latter possible only by leveraging our relationship with the case officer which was developed over the course of the application, and the officer's agreement to accepting and reviewing additional information during the course of the determination period, without the need for excessive extensions of time which in turn would have impacted our client's contractual obligations on site.

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The application was presented at planning committee where Planning Potential spoke on the client's behalf and fielded questions from members about the proposals, which we were able to answer off the back of our thorough understanding of the client's business model and by close working with the operational team, given the sensitive nature of the proposals.

After further debate amongst members, the application was approved unanimously, with members praising the efforts we had gone to, to address the significant number of comments and concerns that were raised over the course of the application.

Summary of achievements

- Clear advice on the strategy required to secure planning permission
- Project management of the process and consultant team
- Preparation of compelling evidence to support the application
- Full co-ordination and submission of the planning application
- Negotiation & liaison with the Local Planning Authority
- Securing unanimous approval at Committee without pre-commencement conditions