

Planning Application Section
Thanet District Council
PO Box 9
Cecil Street
Margate
Kent CT9 1XZ

28th February 2010

Dear Planning Officer

Ref: Planning application F/TH/10/0124

I wish to make a comment on the planning application for Satis House, 11 Elms Avenue, Ramsgate for change of use from office to residential children's home.

The proposed use will be contrary to the Thanet Local Plan, specifically D1 and H11, and Kent & Medway Structure Plan for the following reasons;

This proposal is a totally inappropriate development within a residential area. The children housed in the home will be sharing facilities that will be more intense than if the property was of a single family occupation. The proposed home will give rise to noise, nuisance, disturbance, more callers and visual deterioration of the building and garden. The home will have an unacceptable impact on the locality, and increased levels of activity within close proximity to the existing residential homes. Neighbouring properties will be especially subject to an overbearing impact; the proposed use will not promote public safety and security and/or the perception of public safety or security. It does not support making Kent towns and villages more attractive and safer places in which to live, work or spend time.

Acorn Homes detail in their Statement of Purpose the type of boys they will house; "highly vulnerable young people, predatory young people or young people unable to keep themselves safe", they have "a history of disrupted attachments and challenging behaviour". They "on occasions need protecting from themselves (e.g. self harm, acting out their past abuses on others, predatory behaviour, Schedule 1 offences, damage to property), as well as protecting from others)"

A schedule one offence is an offence of a violent or sexual nature committed against a child, even if you are a child yourself. Examples include fighting, actions that aim to, or do, cause injury, sexual assault, abuse, cruelty or neglect and the most extreme example murder.

This is unacceptable for an area where there are family homes with children in direct proximity and three schools (Clarendon House, Chatham House and Priory Infants Schools) within a short walking distance. These children could well be subjected to the predatory behaviour exhibited by the residents of the home.

Acorn Homes say they will be "offering boys a focus, and a diversion away from drugs, alcohol, gang culture and street crimes". Acorn Homes do not have any children's homes, this will be their first and none of the people mentioned in their statement have experience or a track record in dealing with

these type of disturbed children. They say they will promote an activity based programme but the choice of property is at odds with this as the only outside space is devoted to parking.

Their statement also says they have procedures for de-escalation, restraint and control techniques for when a young person places themselves or others at an unacceptably high level of risk of if the building is being seriously damaged. Their procedure for unauthorised absence or absconding involves immediate search of the premises and surrounding area. They also have a fire and emergency procedure if part of the building is set on fire. This shows an expectation that these situations will occur and is unacceptable to the local community as there will be constant traffic from the emergency services and social work agencies which wouldn't occur if the property was a family home or indeed the block of flats which the owner currently has planning permission for.

The planning application does not give any consideration to the impact on the area. The applicants have not consulted with the local residents regarding the application and/or any impact. The statement of purpose of the home does not give any consideration to the impact on the immediate neighbourhood. It can only be concluded that they have little regard for the views and quality of life of this residential area and any negative impact this change of use will bring about.

Satis House in the past has been a care in the community home for young people with difficulties. At the time local residents experienced unacceptable levels of nuisance involving the police on a number of occasions. Much of this trouble was due to the lack of an outside area for children's activities; they have been described by local residents as in effect being like caged animals. Pedestrians using the passage to the rear of Satis House were subject to abuse and were being frightened by the residents of the home.

Thanet has a history of having children in care placed here and the Office of National Statistics figures showed that of 60 children's homes in the South East (an area from Portsmouth to Milton Keynes) 24 of the homes were in Thanet. Thanet has a high crime rate compared to the Kent and UK average, Central Harbour Ward in Ramsgate, where the home is proposed has the 3rd highest rate in Thanet. It is recognised that Thanet has severe economic and social deprivation and a report by the Kent Child Protection Committee warned that the continuation of the policy of sending vulnerable children to deprived seaside towns could lead to a "community at tipping point" which will "have potentially serious consequences for those people placed there and the local communities".

Unfortunately, we are unable to undo what has happened in the past but we are able to make sure Thanet doesn't repeat the same mistakes again by giving permission for more children's homes to be set up here.

I therefore ask for this application to be refused.

Yours faithfully