

Note in response to the Lymington Society.

My evidence on the availability specialised accommodation for older people concerned provision comparable to that proposed in the application, that is Retirement or Sheltered Housing as defined in NPPG of June 2019. My Proof and appended report dealt with supply, and my oral evidence concerned the percentage of vacant property so far as I could ascertain them, at the level of the area of New Forest District Council. The reasons for adopting that strategic approach I explained in oral evidence.

The Chairman of the Lymington Society has introduced a tabulation within a narrower catchment, that of the settlement of Lymington. In doing so he conflates different styles of provision which, as I explained in oral evidence, is not appropriate or germane to the quantification of current supply or estimation of need for the model of provision proposed in this application.

He lists Buckler's Mews, Lynewood Court and Pyrford Gardens, all of which are Age Exclusive or Age Restricted Housing, a model of provision quite distinct from that proposed in this application. These three schemes with 44 units of accommodation are irrelevant in considering the need for the style of accommodation under consideration in this appeal.

Farringford Court, which the Society also includes in its tabulation, is also not comparable with the development proposed in this application as it provides on-site care services. The 42 units at Farringford Court, whether sold or unsold, are not relevant to judging the need for the units that will be provided by the development proposed in this application.

Within those schemes identified by the Lymington Society in their tabulation that are Retirement/Sheltered, which I list below, there are 249 units of accommodation.

Calculating the number of vacancies from the sales information listed on websites such as Zoopla and Rightmove, as the Lymington Society tell us they have done, is problematic for a number of reasons. Some properties are advertised more than once by different agents in the same listing, many properties are listed on both Zoopla and Rightmove, bringing a risk of double-counting, if numbers of vacancies are not related to schemes named in the schedule there is a risk of including properties not relevant to this case.

It would be usual, in making a calculation for this purpose, to discount initial sales in new developments. Although Knights Lodge was completed in 2018 it is still in an initial sales phase which is a direct consequence of the Covid Pandemic and associated restrictions. The potential residents for the scheme have been, by their age, highly vulnerable through the Pandemic and even more likely than younger groups to delay a house move. Those giving evidence as Interested Parties rightly pointed to the impact of Covid on the rate of sales in general housing, the sort of property potential residents of Knights Lodge would typically need to sell to fund their purchase.

Of the 44 units at Knights Lodge sales have yet to be secured on 19 but there is no reason to believe that the scheme will not be fully occupied in due course, but the current backlog does distort the situation in Lymington in the short-term.

Whilst noting the addition to supply of 44 units that will be delivered following the completion of the development allowed on Appeal at Stanford Hill these are unlikely to be available before late 2023 at the earliest. Whilst they will make a modest contribution to a very significant shortfall in provision, they cannot properly be counted in any estimation of current vacancies.

Careful examination of the listings on the two websites to which the Lymington Society refer and relating properties listed as available for purchase to the relevant developments identified in the Society's tabulation we arrive at a gross total of 36 available properties currently for sale against the total number of 249 units provided in developments comparable to the scheme proposed in this application. This gives a gross vacancy rate of 14%, a little higher than industry averages but readily explicable by the circumstances touched on above.

If, as we would contend is appropriate, the units at Knights Lodge on which initial sales have yet to be completed are discounted then the total number of vacant units on re-sale falls to 17. To provide a fair basis for comparison we would remove all Knights Court units from the equation reducing current supply to 208 units, of which 17 vacancies represents 8%, within the range of industry expectations reflecting normal turnover. This is a little higher than the average for the New Forest District area as a whole but not significantly so.

The discrepancies between these numbers and those offered by the Lymington Society we attribute to a lack of precision in relation to those developments and vacancies included in their calculation.

In passing we note the age of the majority of the comparable developments in Lymington with all but Andrews Lodge (commissioned in 2005) and the newly commissioned Knights Lodge being twenty-five to thirty years old or older. The momentum of provision which is evident in the developments completed between 1978 to 1994 (an average of 10.6 units per annum) has fallen from 1995 to date to an average of 2.9 units per annum. (This includes the total number of units at Knights Lodge but not those at Stanford Hill which are yet to be completed).

With respect I suggest that the Lymington Preservation Society's objection to my evidence of need for further provision of the kind proposed in this application on the grounds that there are currently excess vacancies in current comparable schemes is not substantiated by a careful and discriminating examination of the evidence they have offered.

Market Retirement Housing in Lymington

Name of scheme & date of opening	Address	Manager	Number of units	Zoopla	Rightmove
Andrews Lodge (2005)	66-66A Southampton Road, Lymington, Hampshire SO41 9AX	Millstream Management Services	35 (F) Leasehold	None shown	1 x 2 bed apartment
Bucklers Court (1994)	Anchorage Way, Stanford Hill, Lymington, Hampshire SO41 8JN	FirstPort	39 (F & C) Leasehold	1x1bed apartment 1x2 bed apartment	1x1bed apartment 2x2 bed apartments net addition 1x2 bed apartment
Court Cottages (1990)	Ridgeway Lane, Lymington, Hampshire SO41 8FQ	First Port	9 (C) Freehold	Nil	Nil
Courtlands (1988)	New Street, Lymington, Hampshire SO41 9BJ	Anchor Hanover	19 (F) Leasehold/ Shared Ownership	1x1 bed apartment	Same property
Homewood House (1979)	Milford Road, Pennington, Lymington, Hampshire SO41 8EZ	First Port	47 (F) Leasehold	3x1 bed apartments	Same properties
Knights Lodge (2018)	North Close, Lymington, Hampshire, SO41 9BU	Churchill Retirement Living	41 (F) Leasehold	Churchill Retirement disclose that 19 units are unsold	Counted in Zoopla column
Monmouth Court (1990)	Church Lane, Lymington, Hampshire SO41 3RB	First Port	26 (F & B) Leasehold	2x2 bed apartments 1x1bed apartment	Same properties
Parish Court (1982)	Emsworth Road, Lymington, Hampshire SO41 9BS	Sullivan Lawford	33 (F) Leasehold	4x1 bed apartments	4 x 1 bed apartments of which 1 may be an additional property
Total			249	32	+4