
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 4 June 2020

by K Savage BA MPlan MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 15 June 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/G4240/W/19/3243671

Doctor's Surgery, 156 Stockport Road, Ashton Under Lyne OL7 0NW

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Ms Alex Jones (HT Practice) against the decision of Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 19/00817/FUL, dated 27 August 2019, was refused by notice dated 18 December 2019.
 - The development proposed is installation of security barbed wire on roof.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The description of development in the banner heading is taken from the appeal form as it more succinctly describes the proposal than that given on the application form.
3. The application was made retrospectively and, having confirmed the presence of the barbed wire on the building at my site visit, I have considered the appeal on the same basis.

Main Issue

4. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

5. The Highlands Surgery occupies a prominent position on Stockport Road, though its main entrance is to the side on Pottinger Street, and the rear of the building faces onto Kelvin Street. The front part of the building stands two storeys in height with a single storey section to the rear.
6. Both Pottinger Street and Kelvin Street are characterised by terraced housing, some longstanding, but also some more recently constructed. Whilst both might be initially perceived as 'back streets' given their location off the main Stockport Road, it was evident to me that concerted efforts have been made to improve the quality of the area, including public realm improvements along Kelvin Street, with street trees, new road surfacing and consistent, well-maintained fencing to the rear boundaries of properties. The newer terraced

properties on Pottinger Street are further positive elements which contribute favourably to what is a pleasant, inner urban residential character.

7. The coiled barbed wire is attached around the edge of the single storey, flat roofed section of the building at the rear on three sides. The barbed wire is clearly functional in form and appearance, intended as an overt security measure and lacking any aesthetic qualities. The position of the main entrance on Pottinger Street and the openness of the adjacent junction means that the barbed wire is readily visible to everyone attending the surgery, to passers-by on both streets, and in longer views in both directions along Kelvin Street in particular. Its crude form and obvious security purpose results in an intimidating, defensive appearance to this part of the building which contrasts starkly with the public realm improvements of the immediate surroundings, and detracts from the overall appearance of the surgery building and the principally residential character of the area.
8. For these reasons, I find that the barbed wire harms the character and appearance of the area, in conflict with Policies 1.3, 1.5 and C1 of the Tameside Unitary Development Plan (November 2004), which together seek high quality design in new development which is sensitive to the character and appearance of the surrounding area, and recognises the importance of protecting and enhancing the environment.
9. There would be further conflict with the aims of Paragraph 127 of the National Planning Policy Framework to create high quality places which are visually attractive and establish or maintain a strong sense of place, which are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being, where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion and resilience.

Other Material Considerations

10. The appellant states that the purpose of the barbed wire is to address past security issues at the surgery. It is stated that four attempted break-ins and one successful break-in to the pharmacy on site occurred in the two years prior to installation of the barbed wire, but none have occurred since its installation. The appellant also refers to the sensitivity of personal patient data kept on site, to anti-social behaviour by youths climbing onto the roof to play football or congregate making noise, and high levels of crime generally in the local area.
11. The concerns raised are legitimate, and I have no reason to doubt that the incidents described have occurred. It is also reasonable to consider the barbed wire has been effective in deterring access to the roof by youths. However, the evidence before me does not indicate whether the break-ins were attempted via the flat roof. I also saw other security measures on the building including CCTV cameras, internal shutters and external window bars. The evidence does not indicate whether one or more of these have been installed in conjunction with the barbed wire. Therefore, I cannot be certain that it is the barbed wire alone which has been effective as a deterrent to crime in the period since it was installed.
12. Moreover, beyond brief reference to potential use of anti-theft paint, no evidence has been put to me to demonstrate whether any other security measures have been considered which may be similarly effective deterrents to

accessing the flat roof, but which would not have the same harmful appearance as the barbed wire.

13. I recognise that the appellant considers the barbed wire to have had a positive effect on security; however, the evidence before me does not demonstrate that it alone is the reason for improved security, or that it is the only possible means by which access to the flat roof can be prevented. Consequently, I am not persuaded that the benefits to security provided by the barbed wire are sufficient to outweigh its harmful effect on the character and appearance of the area.

Conclusion

14. The proposal results in conflict with the development plan which is not outweighed by the other material considerations in this case. Therefore, the appeal is dismissed.

K. Savage

INSPECTOR