



Appeal Decision

Site Visit made on 7 April 2021

by Jonathan Edwards BSc(Hons) DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 09 April 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/P4605/W/20/3263313

70-72 Handsworth Wood Road, Birmingham B20 2DT

- 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 Heritage Group against the decision of Birmingham City Council.
 - The application Ref 2019/10518/PA, dated 20 December 2019, was refused by notice dated 13 August 2020.
 - The development proposed is extension to existing care home comprising 13 beds.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matter

2. The description of development in the heading above has been taken from the application form. Part E of the appeal form states the description has not changed but a different wording has been entered. Neither of the main parties have confirmed that a revision has been agreed and so I have used the description from the original application.

Main Issue

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

Reasons

4. The appeal property is a 2 storey high residential care home with various additions to the rear and a large parking area to the back of the plot. The adjoining residences to the side and rear have sizeable back gardens that contain tall trees and bushes but are generally vacant of buildings. This extensive open and vegetated area provides a pleasant environment.
5. The proposal would connect to the existing building and so it would project a significant distance towards the rear of the site. In this regard, it would be at odds with the rear extensions to the properties on either side which are small and do not significantly encroach into the back gardens. Furthermore, the development would extend across most of the plot width and it would be partly 2 storeys high, albeit set below the height of the front of the property. The proposed mix of external materials would provide a degree of relief to the overall bulk of the extension. Nevertheless, by reason of its size, the development would dominate the rear of the property and would result in a large building of an unusual scale in the context of the site.
6. The appeal property is clearly seen from adjoining back gardens. New planting is proposed but the submissions fail to show that this would significantly screen the proposal or soften its visual impact, particularly during times of leaf-fall. A

large area of the plot would remain vacant of buildings and would be landscaped. However, due to its size and visibility from adjoining land, the proposal would markedly erode the sense of openness to the rear of properties. This impact would not be appreciated from the road but nevertheless it would be harmful to the quality of the open back garden context.

7. The development has been designed to help rationalise the use of the site and the scheme and is supported by Council officers. However, these factors do not address or override the detrimental impacts identified above.
8. For these reasons, I conclude the development would harm the character and appearance of the area. In these regards, it would not accord with policy PG3 of the Birmingham Development Plan 2017 (BDP) and saved paragraphs 3.14C-D of the Birmingham Unitary Development Plan 2005. These aim, amongst other things, to ensure the scale and design of new buildings respect the surrounding area and local context.

Other Matters

9. The development would not prejudice highway safety and would include an appropriate drainage system. Acceptability in these regards is a neutral factor in my assessment.
10. The scheme would provide 13 new bedrooms as well as staff and residents' facilities. In this regard, it would potentially help meet the aim of the BDP to provide health care infrastructure as required by Birmingham's population. However, while it is stated that the extra bed capacity would support the National Health Service, no substantive evidence has been submitted that clearly demonstrates a need for the proposal. In the absence of such evidence, I attach limited weight to the benefits of the proposal in these regards.
11. The development would include new security measures although these are not dependent upon the construction of the proposal and so this factor attracts limited weight. The scheme would make more effective use of an urban site and would support construction and potentially other types of employment. However, these benefits would be modest given the number of new bedrooms proposed.
12. Comments have been submitted regarding the effect of the development on the living conditions of occupiers of neighbouring properties. Such concerns are not reflected in the Council's refusal reasons and there is no need for me to conclude on such matters as I am dismissing the appeal on other grounds. For clarity purposes, if found to be acceptable in this regard, such a finding would not have affected my conclusion on the proposal.

Conclusion

13. The harm caused in respect of the main issue is significant and sufficient to find that the proposal would be contrary to the development plan when read as a whole. The benefits of the proposal and other considerations do not justify allowing the appeal contrary to development plan policies. For these reasons, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Jonathan Edwards

INSPECTOR