



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 2 August 2022

by G Bayliss BA (Hons) MA MA MRTPI IHBC

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 24th August 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/E2530/W/22/3295809

Chevington House, 36 North Road, Bourne PE10 9AS

- 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 Mr Dhaliwal, Wellbeing Residential, against the decision of South Kesteven District Council.
 - The application Ref S21/1573, dated 9 August 2021, was refused by notice dated 1 October 2021.
 - The development proposed is the proposed demolition of the rear part of the existing building and the construction of a new 2 storey building to create additional en-suite bedrooms, lounges and ancillary facilities.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development on the character or appearance of the Bourne Conservation Area.

Reasons

3. Chevington House is an established care home occupying a detached two storey property fronting North Road, Bourne. It is of red brick construction with a hipped, slate roof and is set within large, mature grounds which lie to its rear. It is surrounded by two storey detached dwellings and terraced houses of mixed appearance. There are detached dwellings immediately to either side of the appeal site and a retirement development to its rear. A formal avenue of trees accesses the retirement development just to the north, and these are set within a large, prominent grassed area, running from North Road, and part of this area adjoins the boundary of the appeal site.
4. The appeal site is situated in the Bourne Conservation Area. The eastern boundary of the Conservation Area coincides with the rear of the appeal site and also includes the open, grassed area to the north of the appeal site. I have paid special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the Conservation Area, in accordance with the statutory duty set out in Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. This is a matter of considerable importance and weight.
5. The rear garden of Chevington House is primarily lawn with shrubs and trees mainly around the perimeter and a significant large tree at the far end. Views of the rear garden can be afforded from North Road across the open grassed

area leading to The Croft, the views partly filtered by mature trees which lie adjacent to the appeal site boundary. Views of the rear garden are also gained from the gaps to either side of Chevington House on North Road, especially alongside No 34a North Road. Here the open space and mature trees of the rear garden can be glimpsed, and this is characteristic of several properties in the immediate area which have large rear gardens.

6. The rear garden of Chevington House, together with the large area of open space to the north and the associated mature trees reflect the spacious, verdant quality of the immediate area and collectively they add to the significance of the Conservation Area and contribute positively to its character and appearance.
7. The appeal proposal seeks to demolish the existing single storey projections at the rear of the property and construct a large, two storey detached building occupying a substantial part of the landscaped rear garden. The walling of the building would be constructed in red brick, stone and aluminium cladding, and roofing slates would match the existing building. The appeal scheme would substantially expand the capacity of the care home and provide additional en-suite bedrooms, lounges and ancillary facilities.
8. The development would extend directly back from Chevington House, largely mirroring its width. Its ridge height would be lower than the apex of the existing building with slight variations in height and a breaking up of the massing to reduce the bulk of the elevations. It would, however, still be of substantial volume and massing compared to the existing building and other buildings in the immediate area. Furthermore, the building design and use of aluminium cladding would give it a stark and modern appearance which would not assimilate with the more traditional design of the existing property and many others in the immediate area.
9. The proposed development would be located close to sections of its north and south boundaries with few mature trees and shrubs within the site to help soften the appearance of the building in these areas, and seemingly little opportunity for additional planting. The eastern boundary would benefit from existing mature trees and shrubs within the site, although when these trees are not in leaf the screening effect would be considerably diminished. Some additional screening would be provided by substantial trees which are outside but adjacent the appeal site, especially along the northern boundary. Whilst these trees would have some protection by virtue of lying within the Conservation Area, they may become diseased or damaged in the future and the extent of screening cannot be relied on. With the extensive footprint of the proposed development and the provision of hard landscaped areas around its perimeter, there would be little opportunity for the appellant to provide a similar level of meaningful screening within the appeal site, particularly with the lack of space between the proposed building and the northern and southern boundaries. However, in any event, a reliance on screening by planting to mitigate an otherwise inappropriate development is not an effective means of managing visual impact.
10. Notwithstanding the uncertainty regarding the existing trees to continue to provide some screening, and the limited opportunity for on-site landscaping to soften the appearance of the building, there would be some prominent views of the appeal site within the immediate area. The most significant view would be

from the north west, viewed from North Road and from the open space associated with the entrance to The Croft. Here the mass of the building close to the site boundary would be particularly visible, especially during the winter months. The form and massing of the building would not relate to that of the surrounding buildings, and together with the loss of the green, open area, the proposed scheme would harm an otherwise attractive and appealing part of the Conservation Area.

11. Views of the proposed building would also be afforded from the gap between the appeal site and No.34a on North Road. Although this would only be a glimpsed view, the change from a view of a verdant large garden to that of a large building, alien in design and form to its surroundings, would jar with the typically green backdrop to many of the buildings along North Road in the surrounding area.
12. Although the proposed development would still leave some garden area at its eastern end and to the south, immediately behind No.34a North Road, the close proximity to the north and southern boundaries directly behind Chevington House would make the proposed development appear squeezed in and cramped within the plot. This over-development would be out of keeping with the pattern of development in the immediate area. Other residential properties nearby may well have extended into their gardens. However, these are largely subordinate additions and are interspersed with open areas. The scale, form and massing of the proposed building, together with its stark, imposing presence and modern design would be readily viewed from its immediate surroundings and look most out of place in an area of heritage significance, with an open, verdant character. It would neither preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Bourne Conservation Area.
13. For the above reasons, the proposal would have a significantly harmful effect on the character or appearance of the Bourne Conservation Area. The harm to the significance of the Conservation Area would be 'less than substantial' although this still attracts considerable importance and weight in the planning judgement. The Framework sets out the need to weigh the 'less than substantial harm' against the public benefits of the scheme and I address these below.
14. This is an established care home and there is pressure for smaller facilities to upgrade and expand to adapt to changing needs and demands, and to remain financially viable. There is increasing demand, particularly following the closure of a care home nearby. I recognise also that this facility offers a high percentage of its beds to Local Authority supported residents which does not attract the same level of funding as private fee-paying residents.
15. The supporting statement from the Commercial and Procurement Manager at Lincolnshire County Council provides support for the appeal proposal, confirming a growing need for quality residential and nursing care across the county, and specifically in south Lincolnshire. It adds that new schemes such as this appeal proposal would offer increased choice and capacity for those needing care in their local areas.
16. I recognise also that the central position of the facility within the settlement makes it accessible and that it is already part of the community. It is, therefore, desirable to use the positive attributes of this existing site and its location. I also acknowledge that the size and form of the building is to some

extent dictated by the requirements of the care provision and that over the course of the proposal's development meaningful efforts have been made to reduce its visible bulk by reducing the footprint, making design changes, being respectful of surrounding trees and the careful selection of materials.

17. The evidence suggests that the appeal proposal would represent a benefit to care home provision within the community and would provide high quality care facilities. These are significant public benefits. However, the Framework makes it clear that heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource, and I must attach considerable importance and weight to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the Conservation Area. When taking all the above points together, the less than substantial harm to the Conservation Area deriving from the proposal would clearly and demonstrably outweigh the public benefits of the improved care home provision.
18. It would therefore conflict with Policies DE1 and EN6 of the South Kesteven District Council Local Plan (2020) which require development to make a positive contribution to the character of the area and protect and enhance heritage assets. It would also conflict with Section 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2021) (the Framework) relating to designated heritage assets.

Other Matters

19. I have had regard to other matters raised including highway safety, residential amenity, noise and disturbance and the level of care home provision in the area. However, as I am dismissing the appeal on the main issue for the reasons given above, I have not pursued these matters further.

Conclusion

20. I conclude that the proposal would be contrary to the development plan and material considerations do not lead me to decide otherwise. For these reasons, and having regard to all other matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

G Bayliss

INSPECTOR