



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 18 April 2023

by Chris Couper BA (Hons) Dip TP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 4th May 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/P0240/W/22/3310685

130 Bedford Road, Cranfield MK43 0HA

- 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 Cavalieri Holdings Limited against the decision of Central Bedfordshire Council.
 - The application Ref CB/22/02624/FULL, dated 28 June 2022, was refused by notice dated 14 September 2022.
 - The development proposed is described as 'resubmission of approval CB/21/05380/FULL for increase of fence height by 300mm. Proposed approval for existing 2m high close-boarded fence to front boundary to be reduced to 1.7m, along with proposed 1.7m high close boarded automated security entrance gate'.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matters and Background

2. Notwithstanding the existing fences on the site, the proposed fences and entrance gate which would be located towards the frontage, as depicted on drawing no. PL02 Revision D, would be set back to varying degrees from the highway, and would be 1.7 metres high. I have therefore dealt with the appeal as a proposal, and on the basis of that drawing.
3. As referenced in the description of the development, planning permission has previously been granted for a 1.4 metre high fence to the front of the site (Ref: CB/21/05380/FULL). I have had regard to that planning history, but I have considered the scheme before me on its planning merits.
4. Interested parties have referred to, amongst other things, the alleged use of the host property as a house in multiple occupation. However, as the property's use forms no part of the proposal before me, I have not addressed that matter in my decision.

Main Issue

5. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

6. The site lies at the edge of the settlement of Cranfield, and is bordered by a field to the east. Some nearby properties along this stretch of Bedford Road

have open frontages, whilst others have low walls or railings, or vegetation. That mix of landscaping and low-level boundary treatment ensures a smooth transition from the village to the countryside.

7. Although they would be just 300mm taller than the approved fences, at 1.7 metres high rather than integrating with their surroundings, the proposed close boarded timber fences and similar style sliding entrance gate close to the site frontage would be stark features in this prominent and sensitive location at the edge of the village.
8. In particular, there would be an abrupt change from the adjacent field hedgerow, and their height and form would compare unfavourably with the generally much lower front boundary features, hedgerows, and landscaped front gardens, which prevail in the immediate area.
9. Whilst I observed that there is a tall white wall to the front of 112 Bedford Road, that is atypical of the area, as is the close boarded timber fence around the junction of Bedford Road with Crane Way, which in any event is much further into the village.
10. As described in the Design and Access Statement, the host property is being altered to form six care-centred rooms, to cater for an expanding emergency care market in Central Bedfordshire, in line with a key objective of the Central Bedfordshire Housing Strategy 2016 - 2021. However, whilst I understand that these rooms would be occupied by highly vulnerable adults with complex needs, I have no persuasive evidence that fences and a gate at this height, are the only way in which safety and security concerns could be addressed.
11. For the above reasons, the scheme would significantly harm the character and appearance of the area. It would therefore conflict with those parts of Policy HQ1 of the Central Bedfordshire Local Plan 2015-2035 (2021) which seek high quality development, which responds to its context and reinforces local distinctiveness, having regard to matters such as materials, size, scale and landscaping. It would also conflict with the National Planning Policy Framework requirement for well-designed places.
12. Having regard to all other matters raised, the appeal is therefore dismissed.

Chris Couper

INSPECTOR