

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 17 September 2024

by Graham Wraight BA(Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 26 September 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/P2935/W/24/3345874

Amble Boys Club, Percy Drive, Amble NE65 0PL

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by John Kelly against the decision of Northumberland County Council.
 - The application Ref is 23/02764/FUL.
 - The development proposed is an extension to rear of sports hall to extend storage area, changing and training facilities. New extended car parking facilities to accommodate parking for classes. Sports hall to be used for circuit training and kickboxing classes. Gym used for weight training and office space used for youth clubs and massage therapy business.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are the effect of the proposed extension on (i) the living conditions of the occupiers of the adjacent residential accommodation and (ii) the character and appearance of the existing building and the surrounding area.

Reasons

Living conditions

3. The proposed extension would be positioned immediately adjacent to, and run alongside, a considerable length of the boundary that is shared with St Oswald's Court, a complex which provides residential accommodation for older people. There are a number of windows serving the accommodation at St Oswald's Court that face towards the site of the appeal proposal, either directly or at an angle. Those windows are close to the common boundary, but at the present time the boundary treatment is not significant in height. The side elevation of the appeal property is also offset from the boundary, which reduces the impact of its height and massing on the windows in question.
4. The proposal would stand at approximately 4 metres tall. It would be positioned very close to the windows on St Oswald's Court, substantially reducing the outlook from them and creating an oppressive living environment in the rooms they serve. This would especially be the case with respect to those windows situated at ground floor level. There is potential too for a loss

of sunlight to occur to some of the windows during the latter parts of the day, which would further impact on living conditions.

5. For these reasons, I conclude that the proposed extension would cause harm to the living conditions of the occupiers of the adjacent residential accommodation by way of a loss of outlook and a loss of sunlight. Consequently, it would fail to accord with Policy QOP 2 of the Northumberland Local Plan 2022 (LP) where it seeks to ensure that development does not cause unacceptable harm to the amenity of those living in the local area. The proposal would also fail to accord with the aims of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) in the same regard.

Character and appearance

6. The proposed development would have a flat roof, which would be at odds with the shallow dual-pitched roofs found on the various parts of the existing club. However, those existing roofs are so shallow pitched to in effect appear almost flat from some vantage points outside of the appeal site. Furthermore, there is little in the way of design coherence between the different parts of the building as a whole, and as a result it has a purely functional appearance as opposed to making any notable positive contribution to the character and appearance of the area.
7. In that context, the appeal proposal would not cause harm to the character and appearance of the existing building or to that of the surrounding area. There would, therefore, be no conflict with the aims of Policies QOP 1, QOP 2 and INF 2 of the LP where they collectively seek to safeguard character and appearance. There would also be no conflict with the overarching aim of the Framework to achieve well-designed and beautiful places.

Other Matters

8. That Amble Boys Club pre-dates St Oswald's Court does not provide justification for permitting what I have found would be a harmful development. Whilst it is stated that the proposal would enhance the safety of the building and reduce on-street parking, I have not been provided with any substantive information indicating specific existing issues in either regard.
9. There is evidence of support for the principle of the proposed development, including from Amble Development Trust, Amble Youth Project and the Neighbourhood Policing Team. I am sympathetic to the need for the proposal and acknowledge that it would bring benefits to the community, including to younger people. However, this too is not a consideration which would justify the harm to living conditions that would result.

Conclusion

10. Whilst I have found no harm to character and appearance, I have found that there would be harm to the living conditions of the occupiers of the adjacent residential accommodation. Consequently, the proposal fails to accord with the development plan taken as a whole and the appeal should be dismissed.

Graham Wraight INSPECTOR