PLANNING AND DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

PROPOSAL : Side extension to Occupational Therapy Unit
ADDRESS : The Larches, John Munroe Hospital Group Limited, Rudyard, Leek, ST13 8RU
APPLICANT : John Munroe Hospital Group Limited
DATE : November 2019 JOB No. : 2019-2449

INTRODUCTION

The application

The application seeks permission for a minor extension to an existing Occupational Therapy Unit within the John Munroe Hospital grounds. The use falls within the C2 use under the Town and Country Planning Use Classes Order (Residential Institutions). This use class includes use for the "provision of residential accommodation and care for people in need of care" and "use as a hospital or nursing home". The application proposes a 2.8m wide single storey extension alongside the West elevation of the building. The proposal is to provide a small kitchen which selected residents will be free to prepare their own meals. The existing larger kitchen is used by staff to prepare meals for all residents of The Larches. The proposed extension also includes an adjoining washroom and an administrative office.

The application building and its setting

The Larches was erected in the early 1980s as a replacement to an earlier dwelling on the site. It is a brick rectangular bungalow with a concrete tile roof. It was built as a four-bedroom dwelling with a large lounge and a kitchen, bathroom and hall. An extension to the bungalow was granted planning permission in 1998 adding a further bedroom and a study.

The application building is located within a hospital site that provides residential care and rehabilitation for patients with mental illness or challenging behaviour. The hospital buildings are set within landscaped grounds measuring about 2 hectares.

PLANNING HISTORY

The Council's planning website shows the planning permissions for the rebuilding of the former bungalow, and permission granted on appeal in 2008 for a side extension. The hospital site has been the subject of various applications, initially for the change of use of "Fairview" (a former residence) into a residential care home, applications to extend "Fairview"' and, more recently, applications to change the use of former residences in the grounds or adjacent to the site, to a care home use.

PLANNING POLICY

The application site is located in an area of open countryside that has been included in the North Staffordshire Green Belt. The proposal must therefore be judged against the rural policies of the **Staffordshire Moorlands Core Strategy** and the guidance contained in the recently revised National Planning Policy Framework.

The Core Strategy rural policies are contained in section 8.8. These are aimed at the maintenance and promotion of the rural area for sustainable development. **Policy R1** requires all proposals in the rural areas to be assessed according to the extent to which they enhance the character, appearance and biodiversity of the countryside, promote the sustainable diversification of the rural economy, facilitate economic activity, meet a rural community need and sustain the historic environment. Where proposals are considered to represent appropriate development, they should not harm the rural character and environmental quality of the area or any sites designated for their nature conservation, or historical interest by virtue of its scale, nature and level of activity involved and the type and amount of traffic generated or by other effects such as noise and pollution. Where new or replacement buildings are involved,

development should have minimal impact on the countryside and be in close proximity to an existing settlement.

At the heart of the **National Planning Policy Framework** is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. The Green Belt Section of the Framework states that the "fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence". Paragraph 145 states that local planning authorities should regard the construction of new buildings as inappropriate in the Green Belt. It then sets out a range of building proposals that it sees as exceptions to this restrictive policy. Two exceptions are relevant to this proposal. Exception (c) permits the extension or alteration of a building provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building. Exception (g) permits the limited infilling …. of previously developed land which would not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt than the existing development.

EVALUATION

The principal planning issues raised by the proposal relate to the relationship between the proposal and Green Belt and rural areas policy.

In relation to the revised NPPF, the proposal is considered to represent an addition that is proportionate to the existing building. The proposed residents' kitchen and adjoining washroom, and the office proposed by this application are required to improve the level of care and skills of residents and is modest in size. On this basis, the proposal is considered to represent an exception under category (c).

In addition to this, the site is considered to represent "previously developed land". Accordingly, Green Belt policy allows infill projects provided that they do not result in a greater impact on the Green Belt than is the case without it. This previously developed site contains a number of buildings scattered about the grounds of the hospital- there is the principal hospital building (formerly Fairways) and former dwellings that now form part of the hospital (The Larches and High Ash), the covered reservoir and various ancillary buildings. These buildings clearly have a level of impact on the openness of the Green Belt. The modest scale of the proposal is considered to not increase that level of impact. In both respects, therefore, the proposal is considered to meet the Green Belt policy of the Framework.

In terms of the Core Strategy, the proposal does not harm the rural character and environmental quality of the area and does not impact on sites designated for their nature conservation, or historical interest.

On this basis it is considered that the proposal will not harm the Green Belt nor harm the character of the countryside.

In terms of sustainability, whilst the site is away from towns and villages, it is an integral part of the applicant's hospital site. Servicing the application building will not generate additional traffic as this will be shared with the main site.

DESIGN AND ACCESS MATTERS

Use

The application proposal doe not impact on the building and site's use as a C2 use.

Amount

The proposal will provide an additional 21 sq.m. of floorspace.

Layout

The proposed extension is located close to the "shared areas" of the building.

Scale

The scale of the proposal reflects the scale of the existing dwelling.

Landscaping

The site is well landscaped. It is not considered that the proposed use generates a need for additional landscaping.

Appearance

The design and character of the existing dwelling will not be materially affected.

Access

The site fronts the most used road linking Leek with Biddulph. The Baker service 423 runs buses between Leek and Biddulph Mow Cop past the property nine times a day (Mon-Fri) (10.35, 12.55, 14.35, 16.45 from Leek and 08.37, 10.07, 11.50, 14.10, 16.15 to Leek).