

Serious concerns lead to rejection of care home plans

Plans for a new luxury care home in Edinburgh have been thrown out following “serious concerns” about the scale of the proposed development.

The Scottish Government upheld the council’s decision to refuse planning permission for the 62-bed home in Fairmilehead, ruling it would be damaging to the nearby conservation area.

Concerns were also raised that protected trees on the site may have been cut down without permission from the local authority.

Local councillors welcomed news that the appeal was unsuccessful and urged developers to “work constructively with local residents” on future plans.

The original application from Northcare sought to demolish a house which currently sits on the site to make way for the care home – but was met with over 250 objections. The development was labelled “an absolute monstrosity” by one worried local resident.

In December council planners said the three-storey building on Winton Drive would “be out of character and dominate the street” and fail to “draw upon the positive qualities of the area”. Furthermore, they said the number of trees that would need to be felled for its construction would be unacceptable.

Councillors were split over whether to grant planning permission as proposals came before them at the planning sub-committee.

SNP councillor and former planning convener Neil Gardiner backed the plans and argued that “leafy suburbs” were being protected whilst development was being pushed into “working class areas”. However, members narrowly voted to refuse the application.

This week Rob Huntley, a reporter appointed by the Scottish Ministers, supported the council’s conclusions on the case and dismissed an appeal lodged by Northcare.

He said the care home would be “substantially more massive than the generally quite large dwelling houses prevailing in the locality”.

He added: “I find that the proposed development would have a significant adverse effect on the character and appearance of the adjacent conservation area and on its setting.”

Developers said they were prepared to offer a “financial contribution” which could be used to improve the setting of the conservation area, however Mr Huntley said it was not clear how this would be capable of “addressing the harm” that would be caused.

He added that whilst visiting the site recently he noticed that trees had been removed “apparently prior to the submission of the appeal application”.

He noted “the suggestion” that this included trees protected by the council under a preservation order.

Mr Huntley wrote: “There was little evidence remaining on site of the species or precise locations of these trees, although I was able to discern the presence in parts of the site of chippings which may have arisen from tree removal.

“I am unable with certainty to conclude whether any such tree removal that has taken place was in contravention of the tree preservation order in force.”

Cllr Scott Arthur, councillor for Colinton/Fairmilehead, said: “I’m delighted that the Scottish Government’s reporter listened to local people and rejected this appeal. They correctly say it would have adversely affected the setting of the conservation area and have a negative impact on the amenity of the locality.

“I would like to congratulate everyone who opposed this development, they have now been vindicated twice. I hope the owner of the site will now work constructively with local residents to decide its future.

“Most people want more residential care provision in my Ward, but developments of this scale must be designed in partnership with the community and be better connected to local services.”

Councillor Jason Rust, Conservatives, added: “There was overwhelming opposition to the proposed development in the local area and I am pleased the original decision was upheld.

by Donald Turvill, Local Democracy Reporter.

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