

Name of Applicant	Proposal	Expiry Date	Plan Ref.
ParkGate (Bromsgrove) Ltd	Demolition of all structures and hard standings and erection of six detached residential dwellings together with associated access and landscaping. The Mount School, 277 Birmingham Road, Bromsgrove, Worcestershire, B61 0EP	26.01.2018	17/01237/FU L

RECOMMENDATION: That planning permission be **Refused**

Consultations

Highways - Bromsgrove Consulted 03.11.2017

No objection subject to conditions

Conservation Officer Consulted 03.11.2017

The building is clearly a candidate for the Bromsgrove Local Heritage List, compilation of which has recently commenced. I am of the view that it would meet the following criteria for the Local Heritage List:

- Age, authenticity and rarity;
- Architectural Interest & Historic Interest; and
- Landscape Interest

The case for demolition of this heritage asset has not been made, as a scheme for the reuse of the building with some additional new build could provide a similar number of residential units. I therefore recommend that this application is refused.

Drainage Engineers Internal Planning Consultation Consulted 03.11.2017

No objections subject to conditions

Parks & Green Space Development Officer Martin Lewis Consulted 03.11.2017

No objection subject to conditions

Waste Management Consulted 03.11.2017

Financial Requirements for waste storage provision should be met.

Leisure Services Manager Consulted 03.11.2017

Financial contributions required to improve and maintain Lickey End Park.

WRS - Contaminated Land Consulted 03.11.2017

No objection

Arboricultural Officer Consulted 03.11.2017

No objection subject to conditions

Worcestershire Archive and Archaeological Service Consulted

No objection subject to conditions

Publicity:

22 letters sent on the 3rd November 2017 (expired 24th November 2017)
1 site notice posted on the 9th November 2017 (expired 30th November 2017)
1 press notice published 10th November 2017 (expired 24th November 2017)

Neighbour comments:

1 comment has been received raising the following matters:

- o Boundary fence needed to secure privacy; and
- o Damaged trees should be cleared from site

Relevant Policies

Bromsgrove District Plan

BDP1 Sustainable Development Principles
BDP6 Infrastructure Contributions
BDP7 Housing Mix and Density
BDP16 Sustainable Transport
BDP19 High Quality Design
BDP20 Managing the Historic Environment
BDP21 Natural Environment

Others

NPPF National Planning Policy Framework
SPG1 Residential Design Guide

Relevant Planning History

No relevant history

Assessment of Proposal

Site Description

This application site consists of the former Mount School which is a 3 storey Victorian building that is now in office use. The Mount is surrounded by a number of single storey outbuildings that are disused. The site is located in the Green Belt on the edge of the residential area of Bromsgrove. A new development is under construction to the south of the site with a run of residential dwellings located to the north. Fields bound the site to the west. The site is served a single driveway off the Birmingham Road.

Proposed development

Permission is sought to demolish all buildings on the site and erect 6 identical 3 storey detached dwellings. These are substantial 5 bedroom properties each with an integral garage and substantial garden.

Planning Considerations

The main issues to be considered in assessing the application are the following:

- i) Green Belt;
- ii) Residential Amenity;
- iii) Street Scene & Character Impact;

- iv) Housing Mix;
- v) Highways and Sustainability Considerations;
- vi) Ecology;
- vii) Landscape and Trees; and
- viii) Planning Contributions

i) Green Belt

It is first important to determine whether the proposal constitutes an appropriate form of development in the Green Belt when considered against either paragraphs 89 and 90 of the NPPF and policy BDP4 of the BDP. The application site consists of the former Mount School and a series of single storey outbuildings. The main building is in office use. The redevelopment of previously developed sites can be acceptable however it is important to consider whether there is a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt when compared to the current situation.

It is relevant to consider factors such as floor area, height, volume and the siting of the development. Currently development is concentrated on the western half of the site with the Mount School itself which is a mix of 2 and 3 storey in height and then a series of single storey outbuildings. The site has an access in the south east corner with a tarmac parking area in the south west corner of the site. The plans indicate that the Mount School is 11.5m high (although a chimney is 13m high) whereas the replacement dwellings are 9.2m high (although the chimneys are 9.8m high). However, the proposal spreads development across a larger area of the site and all of the built form is substantial 3 storey dwellings whereas currently many areas are covered by low key single storey buildings that vary between 2.3m and 4.4m high. Based on the information provided the proposal would reduce the volume of built form on site by 1.2%, which in visual terms is of negligible difference. However, taking into account the spread of 3 storey development across the site and the addition of garden fencing and garden paraphernalia it is considered that the proposal has a much greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt. The proposal therefore constitutes an inappropriate form of development that by definition causes substantial harm to the Green Belt contrary to NPPF and Policy BDP4 of the BDP. This by definition causes significant harm to the Green Belt. No very special circumstances have been put forward and it is not considered that any exist to outweigh the substantial harm to the Green Belt.

ii) Impact on Amenity

A residential development is currently under construction to the south of the application site and a single dwelling is located to the north. Due to the separation distances involved and the mature boundary treatments there would be no significant amenity impacts.

It is also necessary to consider amenity levels for the occupiers of the proposed dwellings. The facing dwellings retain a separation distance of 21m required by SPG1 and no habitable windows are proposed above ground level on side elevations to ensure no loss of privacy. Substantial gardens are proposed for all 6 dwellings which comfortably exceeds the minimum of 70sqm. The proposal is not considered to unduly impact upon residential amenity in accordance with Policy BDP1 of the BDP and the guidance within SPG1.

iii) Impact on Character and Street Scene

The Mount School comprises a large Victorian vicarage, constructed in 1876-7 to designs by the prominent Birmingham architect JA Chatwin. It was later extended unsympathetically and converted into a school. The application is supported by a Heritage Statement. It is agreed by both the applicant and the Council's Conservation Officer that The Mount is a heritage asset, albeit not of sufficient architectural interest to be included on a statutory list. The Council's Conservation Officer highlights that the building is clearly a candidate for the Bromsgrove Local Heritage List. The Mount dates from 1876/7 and its original form has survived largely intact. The Conservation Officer considers it is a well detailed building which is a good example of the 19th century Gothic architecture commonly used for residential properties including vicarages, at the time.

Policy BDP20 of the adopted Local Plan requires that when considering applications which impact on heritage assets, a 'balanced judgement will be applied having regard to the scale of any harm or loss as a result of proposed development and the significance of the Heritage asset', which mirrors paragraph 135 of the NPPF. In addition BDP 20.5 states 'In considering applications regard will be paid to the desirability of securing the retention, restoration, maintenance and continued use of Heritage Assets, for example, the District Council will support the sensitive reuse of redundant historic buildings, and will encourage proposals which provide for a sustainable future for Heritage Assets, particularly those at risk.'

As The Mount is a non-designated heritage asset, the benefits of the proposed scheme must be weighed against the significance of the asset. Documentation submitted with the application indicates various scenarios for re use, including offices and apartments have been considered but are apparently unviable. Importantly no financial data has been submitted to support this claim. The applicant is of the view that the provision of 6 houses outweighs the loss of the heritage asset. Whilst the provision of housing is clearly a benefit, 6 dwellings will only make a very modest addition to the supply of housing in Bromsgrove District. This clearly does not outweigh the harm arising from the permanent loss of a heritage asset that is worthy of appearing on a local list. The Conservation Officer strongly objects to the demolition of the mount and indicates her support for the conversion and extension of the original building in accordance with BDP20.5.

The intention is to erect 6 identical 3 storey dwellings with dormer windows on the front and rear. The properties have gable end roofs and would be primarily red brick with elements of white render. Such dwellings would not appear out of character with varied dwellings along the Birmingham Road or the adjacent development under construction. The application site is accessed via a long drive and there is substantial tree coverage along the front of the site adjoining the Birmingham Road meaning the proposals impact on the wider street scene would therefore be limited.

In summary the proposal would lead to the loss of heritage asset which is not outweighed by other benefits. Importantly no financial evidence has been presented to validate the argument that reuse is not viable. The proposal is therefore contrary to Policy BDP20 of the BDP and paragraph 135 of the NPPF.

iv) Housing Mix

Policy BDP7 of the adopted Bromsgrove District Plan requires a focus on the delivery of 2 and 3 bedroom properties. This scheme proposes 6 identical 5 bedroom properties which clearly conflicts with the aims of this policy. In a district where there are already a

high proportion of larger detached dwellings a greater mix of house types is required to help redress this situation. The provision of only large detached properties is contrary to Policy BDP7 of the BDP.

v) Highways and Sustainability Considerations

The applicant proposes to utilise the existing drive to access the 6 dwellings. Sufficient space has been provided that 3 parking spaces are available for each dwelling to ensure compliance with the County Council's Parking Standards. The County Council Highway Engineer to the scheme. The proposal therefore accords with Policy BDP16 of the BDP.

vi) Landscape and Trees

There a substantial number of trees on the site, most of which are located towards the northern and eastern boundaries of the site. All of the important trees are being retained and the development does not impinge upon the root protection areas of these trees. The proposal will therefore not unduly impact on the local tree stock in accordance with BDP19 and BDP21.

vii) Ecology

An Ecology Appraisal has been submitted by the applicant. It identifies that one of the buildings on site provides a roost for brown long-eared and common pipistrelle bats. A series of mitigation measures are proposed to ensure that the loss of this habitat can be satisfactorily overcome on site. The proposal therefore has no undue impact upon protected species in accordance with policy BDP21 of the BDP.

viii) Planning Contributions

Planning contributions would not usually be sought on schemes of 10 dwellings or less but in this instance the gross floor area exceeds 1000sqm meaning contributions can be sought. In accordance with paragraph 204 of the NPPF and section 122 of the CIL planning obligations have been requested to mitigate the impact of the development, if the application were to be approved. The obligations would cover open space improvements to Lickey End play area and the provision of bin storage. The applicant has refused to enter into a legal agreement. Consequently the proposal will have an adverse impact on infrastructure in the local area contrary to Policy BDP6 of the BDP.

Conclusion

The proposal is acceptable in terms of character, amenity and landscape considerations. However, the development is considered to be inappropriate development in the Green Belt and there are not considered to be very special circumstances to clearly outweigh the harm. The proposal would also result in the loss of a heritage asset, has a negative impact on local infrastructure and fails to provide adequate housing mix. The proposal is therefore contrary to Policies BDP4, BDP6, BDP7 and BDP20 of the BDP and the NPPF.

RECOMMENDATION: That planning permission be **Refused**

Reasons for Refusal

- 1) The proposed development does not fall within any of the categories of appropriate development specified in Policy BDP4 of the Bromsgrove District Plan

2017 (BDP) or at paragraph 89 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2012 (NPPF). Thus, the dwellings constitute an inappropriate form of development in the Green Belt which harms the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness and harm to the openness of the Green Belt. No very special circumstances have been put forward or exist that would clearly outweigh the identified harm to the Green Belt.

- 2) The proposal results in the complete demolition of a non-designated heritage asset of particular architectural merit. Its loss has not been fully justified and would not be outweighed by the benefits of the scheme. The proposal is therefore contrary to Policy BDP20 of the BDP and paragraph 135 of the NPPF.
- 3) The scheme provides only 5 bedroom properties thereby further unbalancing the local housing market and failing to meet the identified need for smaller properties contrary to Policy BDP7 of the BDP and the NPPF.
- 4) This major application would have an adverse impact on infrastructure in the local area. Contrary to paragraph 204 of the NPPF the applicant has failed to enter into a S106 agreement to mitigate these impacts.

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