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Subject: LU/136/21/PL

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Mewsbrook House 59 East Street Littlehampton BN17 6AU

Second & third storey extensions to existing care home to provide 14 No. new residential care rooms. This application may affect the setting of listed building, may affect the character & appearance of the East Street Conservation Area & is in CIL Zone 4 (Zero Rated) as other development

Mewsbrook House is a listed building which is also located within a conservation area. As part of paragraph 189 of the NPPF, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected as part of their proposals, including any contribution made by their setting, in determining applications. The application documents do not include an adequate heritage asset assessment, i.e. one which describes the significance of the assets affected along with an assessment and understanding of the potential impact of the proposals on that significance. The application does not therefore meet the requirements of paragraph 189 of the NPPF. As a consequence, this information should be submitted during the lifetime of this application. This is disappointing as failure to provide this will mean that a thorough assessment cannot be made. However, I will provide some comments based upon my own assessment.

The listed building is probably C18 disguised in later stucco, 2 storey and tall hipped mansard roof. Street front 2 windows, main (side) front 3 windows. Triple windows; half height on 1st floor; glazing bar sashes. Horizontal channelling ground floor. Band over, supporting corner pilasters of 1st floor and coupled pilasters framing slight centre recess of main front. Small brackets below 1st floor sills and moulded panels below. Band above 1st floor and paired eaves brackets Glazing bars to dormers.

The special character and appearance of the conservation area largely derives from the great variety in age (although the majority of the buildings are Victorian and Edwardian), style, form and function of the buildings within the area. Large formal buildings, such as Roland House and Winterton Lodge and the Manor House, contrast in scale and style with nearby domestic buildings often constructed in a vernacular style using local materials. Mewsbrook House makes a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area where its pale coloured stuccoed facades contrast pleasantly with nearby flint buildings and walls. There have been some unfortunate and disappointing changes to the windows within the building.

The Proposal

Whilst the application identifies that the intention is to construct second and third storey extensions to existing care home, the plans indicate that only a second floor would be constructed (subject to gaining consent).

Therefore, I read the proposal as being for an additional floor as well as internal alterations. It would appear that the reason is to provide more and improved accommodation for the existing use.

The building has already been altered with large two storey extensions being constructed in order to provide for additional accommodation. Whilst these are technically to the rear of the building, they are clearly visible from the surrounding public road and path network. Whilst the extensions are considered to be of a standard, if somewhat plain design, they are at least, visually subservient in scale (in terms of height) to the listed building.

“Modern extensions should not dominate the existing building in either scale, materials or situation. There will always be some historic buildings where any extensions would be damaging and should not be permitted, or it might be the case that some buildings can only be extended so far. Successful extensions require the application of an intimate knowledge of the building type that is being extended together with a sensitive handling of scale and detail.

The extension would have the same number of floors as the listed building with a higher eaves and roofline. The result will be an extension that is both larger in scale and height, and no longer subservient to the main listed building. This along with the existing large footprint would mean that it would dominate the listed building. The additional floor would therefore detract from the prominence of the listed building.

Windows are an important part of a building's history and can be invaluable to our understanding of historic properties. They can tell us not only of changing architectural taste but social hierarchy, building economics, technical advances and social history through taxation of windows and building materials. Above all, windows are a key part of the architectural composition of a building, and help to establish the character of a house or building and sometimes a whole area.

As previously mentioned, it has been noted that there are a number of existing windows which appear to be UPVC ones. It is not clear if consent was granted for their installation. UPVC is not a traditional, vernacular material and is unsuitable for use in historic buildings. uPVC windows are often crudely detailed, and the size of frame is usually much larger than that of a traditional window, giving uPVC windows an obtrusive, 'chunky' appearance. The shiny finish of uPVC is also out of keeping with traditional materials. Therefore, the use of UPVC cannot be supported as it is considered to be harmful to the listed building. I believe that previously consent was granted for the use of aluminium windows only for the previously approved extension. It is therefore not clear why an alternative material has been used.

Conclusions

The application documents do not include an adequate heritage asset assessment, i.e. one which describes the significance of the assets affected along with an assessment and understanding of the potential impact of the proposals on that significance. The application does not therefore meet the requirements of paragraph 189 of the NPPF.

Based on the comments above, it is considered that the proposal is such that the impact can be described as causing less than substantial harm in accordance with paragraph 196 of the NPPF (2019). As such, you will also need to consider the public benefits that the development may

achieve as part of your assessment of the application, along with the contents of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (as amended).

Martyn White

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Please note: I work on Conservation for half of the working Week (all day Monday and Friday and Tuesday Afternoons)

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