

Planning Application: 6/2018/3292/MAJ

41 Broadwater Road, Welwyn Garden City

Erection of four storey development comprising 91 x bed care home with 13 x care suites

Dear Sir/Madam

I live at 18 Birkin Court, Welwyn Garden City. Similar to my neighbours, when I purchased the property in September 2018, I was told by the developer that the back of my property would be overlooking the amenity garden of a care home. I was therefore shocked and concerned to see that the plan has completely changed (it was originally a 83 bed care home and part 2, 3 and 4 storey) and that I will now instead be overlooking a congested car park, refuse store, a ginormous 4 storey building (mine is only 3 storey) where a significant number of the residents of the care home would be able to see my bedrooms, lounge and garden, as well as the fact that I would be breathing in car fumes, smell from their commercial kitchen when I sit in the garden or staying in the lounge with my bi fold door open. I would therefore object to the development based on the following reasons:

1) Loss of light or overshadowing

The care home is only 12 metres from the boundary of my garden and 24 metres from the back of my house. I have a south facing garden and my house is only 3 storey high. As indicated on the Streetscene Elevation, the proposed care home will be built on higher ground, plus it is a 4 storey building and therefore it would be significantly taller than my house. There is no light/shadow study submitted as part of the planning application, it is highly probable that the sunlight would no longer be able to reach my garden, lounge and two bedrooms as it will be blocked by the care home in the future. My right of light is definitely impacted negatively and I would suggest that the care home is set back by a further 12 metres to ensure that I will not be losing any natural light that I'm currently enjoying in my property and garden.

2) Overlooking/loss of privacy

The back of my property, where two of my bedrooms and the living room are located as well as my garden will be highly visible by the care home residents. Given that the residents from this particular type of care home are likely to stay indoor most of the time, and that there are a number of balconies, which implies that a significant number of care home residents will be able to see straight into my bedrooms and lounge throughout the day and night, which is clearly a loss of privacy, in fact I will have very little privacy (if any) even at my own home as a result of this care home. Also there are children playing in my neighbours gardens, is it right that they are constantly watched by many strangers? More reason why the care home must be set back by 12 metres.

3) Visual amenity

The proposed care home is situated extremely close to a Grade II listed building, the former Roche Products Factory. The building is this country's only example of the architecture of Otto R Salvisburg, a modernist architect whose work in Berlin has been recognised as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The exterior design of the care home is not in keeping with the area and that a significant number of residents would experience a deterioration of their views.

4) Inadequate parking/loading/turning

There are a total of 104 bed units in the care home, and expected to employ 23 staff as stated in the Transport Statement, the proposed number of parking spaces of 33 is clearly not enough and I worry about the impact this will have on my road. In particular, I fear that cars from visitors to the care home will start parking on our street and in our private residential bays, worse of all, they may park on Broadwater Road and neighbouring roads where there is currently very little parking restriction.

There is also a proposal that 10 of the parking spaces will be taken out of use on refuse collection days, which will only leave 23 spaces to be used by staff, visitors, doctors and nurses, this is nowhere near enough parking provision for a site of this size.

I have significant concerns over the fact that the car park of the care home is backing onto my wooden garden fence. There is no additional buffer to separate the boundary of my property and the 104-bed care home, my 5cm thick wooden garden fence is the only buffer! A car could easily roll into my garden, which is a huge health and safety concern. I would request that additional buffer must be put in, which should be in the form of additional soft landscape, trees, shrubs, etc plus a separate taller metal fence to be built by the care home to add as a separate buffer. Their car park must have at least a 5 metre buffer zone from the boundary of my garden.

The proposed location of the car park is completely inadequate, polluted car fumes, noise from running engines, opening and closing of doors (I could be affected throughout the night as the care home is open 24/7 and that their staff will be working on shift pattern), plus the fact that there is the main ambulance, refuse vehicle route at the back of residential gardens, where children are playing outdoors. This poses a serious threat to our health and completely undermines the Government's desire to encourage more outdoor physical activities. Moreover, my neighbours and I will be exposed to noise pollution from the refuse vehicle and likely to be disturbed by the ambulance sirens/blue lights, where we would be able to hear and see from our house as we are facing the main entrance of the care home.

Furthermore, it is unclear from the proposed layout where the streetlights will be located in the car park, they could add further light pollution to my property. They will in fact impact on the quality of sleep as two of my bedrooms, plus the lounge would be impacted by the streetlights in their car park.

It is also unclear whether there would be coaches/mini buses used by the care home, if the car park is going to be located at the back of my garden with no buffer, is there enough room for these vehicles to turn round without damaging my fence (or the possibilities of these vehicles ending up in my garden!)

5) Smells

The location of the kitchen flue will only be 12 metres from my garden and 24 metres from my living room/bedrooms. The kitchen from the care home is clearly a commercial kitchen, it is completely unreasonable that this is located in such close proximity to residential homes. It is highly probable that when we are in the garden and/or with the living room bi-fold door open, we will be affected by the kitchen smell. Or worse of all, we will not be able to open any of the bedroom windows because of the smells. Why don't they put the kitchen flue to the East or South of the building, where there is a long tree line to absorb the smell?

The location of the refuse store must be moved, again it should be moving away from our garden.

Moreover, it is very likely that the smoking area will be located close to the main entrance, again, it is highly probable that my neighbours (including young children) and I are exposed to passive smoking, which is a great harm to our health.

6) Design, appearance and materials

The exterior design of the care home is horrendous and the appearance is not in keeping with the other buildings in the area. I have major concerns over the height of the building, where a heritage impact assessment has not been done as part of the planning application. In particular, there is a Grade II listed building less than 50 metres away. As it stands, the top floor of the care home is too dominant and something must be done to soften the impact. The appearance of the balconies also look awful and none of the houses in my neighbourhood have balconies.

Another general observation, I note that not all of my neighbours have been informed about the proposed development and they are directly impacted by it, I would request that the consultation time period be extended and all of the residents living in Birkin Court be written to.

Yours Faithfully

18 Birkin Court, Welwyn Garden City AL7 3FA