

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 14 February 2017

by J J Evans BA (Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government

Decision date: 13 March 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/B1740/W/16/3163552

53 Parsonage Barn Lane, Ringwood, BH24 1PT

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mr & Mrs Brothers against the decision of New Forest District Council.
 - The application Ref 16/11049, dated 22 July 2016, was refused by notice dated 26 September 2016.
 - The development proposed is the separation of existing annex to form new dwelling.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matters

2. At my visit it was apparent that a rear bedroom in the main house had been changed to a boiler / utility room, and that a kitchen had been installed in the annexe. There were also two outbuildings in the garden. These buildings and the internal changes have not been depicted on the submitted drawings (ref SBA.3582-7-1B). For the avoidance of doubt I have confined myself to the consideration of the appeal proposal before me, rather than what has occurred on site.

Main Issues

3. The main issues in this case are (i), the effect of the separation of the annex to form a new dwelling on the character and appearance of the area; (ii), whether the proposal would provide acceptable living conditions for future occupiers; and (iii), the effect of the proposal on highways safety.

Reasons

Character and Appearance

4. 53 Parsonage Barn Lane is positioned within a residential area comprising a mix of ages and styles of mostly detached dwellings. This detached house has an attached annex to the rear, and the building occupies the corner formed by the junction of Parsonage Barn Lane with Redwood Close. A high timber fence bounds part of the front and most of the side garden of the house, providing enclosed private gardens.
 5. The proposed creation of a separate residential unit would necessitate the removal of part of the existing kitchen that links the house to the annex. The new detached building would be of a similar size to others found in the area.
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I appreciate that the Council have permitted the development present upon the site, but the physical linkage of the annexe to the house, its design, along with its subservient form and relationship makes it clearly legible as an extension. The separation of the annexe would create a detached dwelling that would mostly be bound by narrow strips of land, thereby having an overly cramped and enclosed appearance.

6. Moreover, dividing the existing garden with a tall fence to create private space for the future occupiers of the new dwelling would exaggerate this harm. Whilst nearby dwellings are positioned in closely spaced rows, they have open front gardens as well as gardens to the rear. This gives a rhythmical and spacious character and appearance to the area that the appeal proposal would be at harmful odds with. Despite the existing tall boundary fence, the shared use of the garden has preserved some degree of openness to the site that would be eroded by the proposal.
7. The annexe is currently unoccupied and my attention has been drawn by the appellants to its previous use as effectively a self-contained dwelling. Be that as it may, I agree with the Council that the use of the site by a family and its dependants would be very different to the provision of two separate households. The severance of the annexe would necessitate the provision of segregated not shared facilities. The subdivision of the garden, and the consequential intensity of use by two households, including the duplication of residential paraphernalia that would be concentrated to the front of the new property, would unacceptably exaggerate the cramped nature of the development.
8. Thus the separation would unacceptably harm the character and appearance of the area. This would be contrary to the requirements of an objective of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) for development to respect local character and distinctiveness. Moreover it would fail to accord with the requirements of Policy CS2 of the New Forest District Council Local Development Framework Core Strategy Outside the National Park (2009) (CS). This policy seeks, amongst other things, well designed development that respects the character and local distinctiveness of an area. Although the appellants do not consider this policy bears directly on the case, as the proposal would constitute development and would require a number of physical alterations to the existing buildings and to the site and its use as a whole, I have therefore had regard to its requirements.

Living Conditions

9. The proposed demolition of part of the shared kitchen would increase the amount of open space on the site. Nevertheless, the resultant narrow strips to either side of the proposed tall boundary fence would have limited practical use due to their constrained nature. External day-to-day living requirements would have to be concentrated to the front of the new dwelling, particularly as its side window and door would restrict use of the passageway. Moreover, the fence would be close to the ground floor side window of the new dwelling. I appreciate this room has a window to the front, and whilst noting that it this is not a matter for the main parties, the proximity of the fence would be an oppressive outlook for future residents, thereby exaggerating the cramped nature of the proposal.

10. The appellants have referred to the requirement to provide a mix of dwellings, and that within the Council's area there is a pressing need for smaller homes. Nevertheless such a benefit would be modest and would not outweigh the harm I have found.
11. Whilst not everyone may want a large garden and the Council have no policies as regard garden sizes, it is a requirement of CS Policy CS2 and the Framework to seek well-designed development with a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings. Thus, for the reasons given I find the proposal would fail to provide acceptable living standards for future residents, thereby conflicting with these requirements.

Parking

12. There are currently two off-road parking bays serving the property providing a total of three spaces. The Council are concerned that the proposal would not provide either dwelling with sufficient parking provision, thereby deflecting vehicles to park on the highway, including the busy local road of Parsonage Barn Lane. From my early afternoon site visit it was apparent that this lane is moderately busy with pedestrians, public transport and motorists, and that in places it had no footway. Apart from restricted parking near to a convenience store, along much of this road and Redwood Close there is on-street parking. In view of the sports fields, shop and nearby school, I do not doubt that at certain times of the day the road would be busier than I observed during my visit and that parking on the street may restrict this road to a single lane.
13. The proposed parking provision would be two spaces less than the five spaces recommended by the Council's Parking Standards Supplementary Planning Document (2012) (SPD). However, the existing dwelling as a whole has the capacity of being occupied by several people at any one time, and this requirement for parking would be very similar to that required for the proposed scheme. I appreciate that residents would wish to park close to their homes, but in view of the unrestricted parking near to the site and the lightly trafficked nature of Redwood Close, it would be unlikely that parking would occur on the road junction.
14. Furthermore, the proposal would not alter the existing accesses to the site. The parking for the annex may be close to the junction of Redwood Close with Parsonage Barn Lane, but drivers negotiating the corner would not be travelling at speed, and due to the residential nature of the area, they would be alert to the possibility of vehicles both parked on the highway and within off-road parking areas.
15. Thus the proposal would not significantly harm highway safety. As such the scheme would accord with the requirements of the Framework and those of CS Policies CS2 and CS24 that seek amongst other things, well-integrated and appropriate levels of parking provision.

Other Matters

16. The site is near to two European nature conservation designations, the New Forest European Site and the Solent Coastal European Site. Where on-site mitigation cannot be provided to mitigate the impact of the recreational visits of future residents to these designations, the Council requires a financial contribution for off-site mitigation. The Council have undertaken an

assessment of the harm of the proposal on these designations, including the provision of mitigation, to which the appellants have not objected. However, as I am dismissing the appeal for other reasons this matter has not been decisive.

17. The main parties have referred to an emerging Local Plan, although I have not been directed to any policies within it as the Council considers there are none relevant to the appeal. Having regard to this, and also to the very early stage of the plan, I have given very limited weight to it.

Conclusion

18. Thus, for the reasons given above and having considered all other matters raised, the appeal is dismissed.

J J Evans

INSPECTOR