
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 14 March 2017

by R C Shrimplin MA(Cantab) DipArch RIBA FRTPI FCI Arb MCIL

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

Decision date: 30th March 2017

Appeal Reference: APP/J3530/D/17/3167844 44 Westmorland Road, Felixstowe IP11 9TE

- 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 and Mrs T Harman against the decision of Suffolk Coastal District Council.
 - The application (reference DC/16/3948/FUL, dated 20 September 2016) was refused by notice dated 2 December 2016.
 - The development proposed is described in the application form as a “two storey extension to front elevation, first floor extension to side elevation and single storey rear extension”.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for a “two storey extension to front elevation, first floor extension to side elevation and single storey rear extension” at 44 Westmorland Road, Felixstowe IP11 9TE, in accordance with the terms of the application (reference DC/16/3948/FUL, dated 20 September 2016), subject to the following conditions.
 1. The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this decision.
 2. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved drawings:
 - drawing number GDB:01-01 (Plans and Elevations as Existing);
 - drawing number GDB:01-02 (Plans as Proposed).
 3. No development shall take place until samples (or specifications) of the materials and drawings (at appropriate scales) of the construction details to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of the new development hereby permitted have been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details, using the approved materials.

Main issue

2. The main issue to be determined in this appeal is the effect of the proposed development on the character of the host building and its surroundings.

Reasons

3. The appeal site lies within an established area of residential development, close to the coast but away from the sea front. The location has a suburban character with houses in conventional forms on good sized plots. The appeal site itself is occupied by a two-storey, four-bedroom house on a relatively large plot. It is set back from the highway, with a double garage at the front of the main part of the house, served by a parking and turning area.
4. It is now proposed to carry out a construction project that would involve extensions to the front, rear and side of the existing building. The scheme would involve the conversion of part of the ground floor, to create a new "cinema room" and "study", with a large extension at the rear, opening on to the back garden. On the first floor, a new bedroom would be created at the front of the house, with an associated en-suite bathroom and dressing room. The existing "bedroom 1" would also be provided with an en-suite bathroom and dressing room.
5. It has been pointed out that planning permission has recently been granted for an alternative scheme at 44 Westmorland Road, under reference DC/17/0257/FUL (dated 27 February 2017). This scheme differs from the appeal proposals primarily as a result of the omission of the proposed new "bedroom 5" (and its en-suite facilities) at first floor level on the front elevation. Other changes include a small reduction in the depth of the rear single storey extension and the conversion of the existing garage to form a fifth bedroom, rather than a "cinema room".
6. Among other things, the 'National Planning Policy Framework' emphasises the aim of "requiring good design" in the broadest sense (notably at Section 7) and it points out the importance of creating an attractive streetscape and maintaining the overall quality of the area. It is aimed at achieving good design standards generally, which includes protecting existing residential amenities and providing good standards of accommodation.
7. An emphasis on the importance of good design is also to be found in the Development Plan, notably, in the context of this appeal, at Policies DM21 and DM23 of the Council's Local Plan 'Development Management Policies'. The Council's Supplementary Planning Guidance on "House Alterations and Extensions" (dating from 2003) is also relevant, though it does not have the same force as Policies in the Development Plan.
8. The proposals that are the subject of this appeal include a number of elements. The proposed rear extension would not have an unacceptable impact on neighbours or on the surrounding area more generally (even though it would be slightly deeper than the recently approved scheme), while the side extensions, at first floor level, would not create an unduly long or overbearing flank wall, in its context. The proposed alterations at the front of the building are more contentious, however.
9. There has been some criticism of the proposal to create a "cinema room" within the existing double garage but it is not normally possible to limit the use of individual rooms within a dwellinghouse under the planning legislation. However, the objection raised by the Council, in their single reason for refusing

to permit the development, relates to the design of the proposed forward projection at first floor level.

10. The existing building is set back from the road frontage and the proposed front extension would be constructed partly over the rear part of the double garage that already projects forward of the main part of the building. Houses in this part of the frontage are set at an angle to the line of Westmorland Road, in a staggered pattern, and the proposed front extension would not be unduly intrusive in the streetscene. The design would incorporate a striking window feature to light the new main stair of the house but, while this element would need to be carefully detailed, it would not be visually harmful in itself. Even though the proposed new front extension would have a greater width and projection than the element which has been approved, under a unifying hipped roof, it would be acceptable in design terms.
11. Evidently, the appeal site lies within an established urban area, which is "sustainable" in planning terms, and the proposed extension would be a useful addition to the accommodation at 44 Westmorland Road. The contribution that the appeal scheme would make to the provision of residential accommodation in the locality, even though it would be limited, weighs in favour of the appeal. I have concluded that the project would not be in conflict with the Development Plan, in principle. In short, I am persuaded that the scheme before me can properly be permitted, subject to conditions and, although I have considered all the matters that have been raised in the representations (including objections put forward by nearby residents), I have found nothing to cause me to alter my decision.
12. I have, however, also considered the need for conditions and, in imposing conditions, I have taken account of the conditions suggested by the Council in the usual way (without prejudice to their main arguments in the appeal). For the avoidance of doubt, a more specific condition has been imposed to require the submission of details of the proposed construction materials (since the drawings themselves provide only limited information in certain respects).

Roger C Shrimplin

INSPECTOR