
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 18 April 2017

by Graham Chamberlain BA (Hons) MSc MRTPI

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

Decision date: 21st April 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/J3530/D/17/3170980

184 Grange Road, Felixstowe, Suffolk IP11 2QF

- 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 James Law against the decision of Suffolk Coastal District Council.
 - The application Ref DC/16/4674/FUL, dated 27 October 2016, was refused by notice dated 16 December 2016.
 - The development proposed is a three bay garage.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue in this appeal is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

3. The appeal site encompasses 184 Grange Road (No 184) and the associated residential curtilage. The property benefits from a large front garden, which is undeveloped and extensively landscaped. The front garden, in combination with the frontage of the Firs Care Home to the south, contributes positively to the street scene, especially the landscaping along the boundary with the highway. There are views of the front elevation of No 184 from the north-west when looking south along Grange Road and filtered views through the existing boundary landscaping from directly outside the site.
 4. The appeal scheme would result in a large solid structure being erected close to the front boundary of the appeal site. It would encroach into and erode the frontage landscaping and would be disproportionately prominent in views along Grange Road, an impact that would be compounded by the removal of two trees (a yew and elder), which are not the subject of a Tree Preservation Order that covers other nearby trees. As a consequence, and unlike the existing garage, the proposed garage would be a harmfully dominant addition to the street scene and would reduce the spacious appearance of the front garden. Moreover, it would interrupt the existing views of the host property and would not have a positive interaction with the street scene due to its unarticulated and blank east elevation. In this respect, its siting, bulk and height would seriously detract from the character and appearance of the area.
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5. In reaching this view, I note that the Council's reference to spacing and layout standards has not been supported by a substantive analysis of the area's spatial layout and my attention has not been drawn to any local standards that may apply. Moreover, the Council have not articulated what it considers the existing townscape quality of the street scene to be. Nevertheless, I share the view of the Council that the structure would be unduly prominent and would detract from views of the host property. It is for these reasons that the appeal scheme would harm the street scene.
6. The garage would be set back from the road by between 0.7m and 2.2m and this would provide some space for landscaping between the proposed garage and the road. This would supplement the exiting hedge, which would be retained. However, it is unlikely that there would be sufficient room for landscaping to mature to a height and thickness where it would soften views of the garage to a notable extent. In any event, soft landscaping cannot be relied upon as a means of mitigating the unacceptable visual impact of a structure as it may fail or be removed in the future.
7. The style and scale of properties in the area is mixed and it generally has a suburban character. Nevertheless, Grange Road becomes more verdant when moving south past Cloncurry Gardens, which is a residential cul-de-sac to the north of the appeal site. There is a notable contrast between the verdant and spacious front garden of the appeal site and the bungalows to its north. Consequently, the proposed alignment of the garage with the bungalow at the entrance to Cloncurry Gardens does not justify the appeal scheme.
8. I therefore conclude that the proposal would harm the character and appearance of the area and this would be contrary to Policy DM21 of the Suffolk Coastal District Local Plan – Core Strategy and Development Management Development Plan Document 2013, which seeks to ensure proposals are not of a poor visual design or seriously detract from the character of their surroundings.

Other Matters

9. There is a Lawful Development Certificate in place that confirms the exiting garage can be converted to a domestic annex without planning permission having to be granted. At the time of my visit these works do not appear to have commenced. Even if they were to commence in the future the property would function adequately without garaging due to the expansive area of off road parking and therefore the loss of the existing garage would not justify the appeal scheme. There is a small single garage across the road from the appeal site but the presence of this structure does not justify the appeal scheme because it would be notably larger and significantly more prominent.

Conclusion

10. The appeal scheme would be contrary to the development plan and material considerations do not indicate planning permission should be forthcoming in spite of this. Accordingly, for the reasons given above, and having regard to all other matters raised, I conclude the appeal should be dismissed.

Graham Chamberlain
INSPECTOR