

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 27 April 2017

by Gary Deane BSc (Hons) DipTP MRTPI

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

Decision date: 16 May 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/B1225/D/17/3170771

1 Hardy Road, Wareham BH20 4QB

- 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 Andrew Gray against the decision of Purbeck District Council.
 - The application Ref 6/2016/0626 was refused by notice dated 25 January 2017.
 - The development proposed is repairs and re-modelling to existing house, erect rear and first floor extensions and install renewable energy systems.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main issue

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

Reason

3. The proposal is to extend and alter the appeal property, which is a detached bungalow situated towards the entrance of a cul-de-sac of similar properties within a larger estate style residential area. It occupies a prominent plot facing the junction between Hardy Road and Stowell Crescent. At this point, there is a transition in existing built form. The consistent style and height of the Hardy Road bungalows gives way to a greater variety of dwellings on Stowell Crescent, with one and two-storey buildings evident along this highway.
 4. The completed dwelling would be 2-storey, with a single storey front and rear projections. It would be modern in style with clean rectilinear lines, large glazed units to the front and rear elevations and a tall central chimneystack. The walls would be finished in local stone, render and larch cladding. The roofs would be flat with the lower sections largely covered with a sedum mat. Solar panels would be placed onto one side of the upper roof, behind a parapet.
 5. The proposed design would set the finished dwelling apart from the more traditional style of other nearby buildings. Creating a definitive end stop to Hardy Road in this way would not in principle look out of place given the curved junction arrangement with Stowell Crescent and the site's position at the interface of one group of properties with another. The relatively open frontage to the site would allow a strong visual statement to be made that could encourage others to follow suit and enhance the overall qualities of the area.
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6. As such, the appeal property offers an interesting opportunity for a bespoke scheme, particularly one with good green credentials. From what I saw, the area to which the site belongs, while having a coherent residential character and some general uniformity in built form, is also capable of successfully accommodating a variety of dwellings in terms of their design and appearance.
7. In this case, the finished dwelling would be far more substantial in built form than the existing dwelling and the bungalows on either side of it. As a result, the proposal would cause No 1 to significantly gain prominence in the street scene, as the appellant's computer generated images show. The top of the main building would only be slightly taller than the ridge of 3 Hardy Road to one side and a little higher than that of 43 Stowell Crescent on the other. However, 2-storey built form would extend across the much of the plot's width with the new first floor element noticeably above the relatively low eaves of both adjacent bungalows. In that context, I share the Council's central concern that the upper part of the finished dwelling would cause it to appear overly large and bulky for the plot. With the new first floor built form in place, the presence of No 1 in the street scene would be too imposing. It would also relate awkwardly to the more modest proportions and pitched roofs of the bungalows on each side, and those along the same side of Hardy Road. Although there is a variety of houses and bungalows along Stowell Crescent, with some sizeable roofs and dormers, it is Nos 3 and 43 and the row of bungalows along the same side of Hardy Road that the proposal would be mainly visually 'read'.
8. In my experience, the use of complementary external materials, as proposed here, can help assimilate new development that differs to other nearby properties into the prevailing local character of the area. However, that approach would not diminish the scale and mass of the new first floor element nor the effect of the visually strong horizontal lines in the front façade would have in accentuating the scale and bulk of the building.
9. In reaching these conclusions, I have taken into account the set back at first floor level from the main front build line. The stepped profile of the completed building with the single storey garage in front of the main house would also visually break down the scale and mass of the building to some extent. The new development would also take advantage of the difference in local ground levels and a good-sized front garden would remain with the new built form in place. Landscaping would visually soften the proposal to a degree when seen from some vantage points. However, for the reasons given, I consider that the appeal scheme would introduce a discordant element that would be obtrusive in the street scene and materially harmful to the area's visual character.
10. Planning policy at all levels welcomes innovative design. Developments that contrast in style can positively contribute to the diversity of an area and enliven the street scene to which they belong. However, that policy support is qualified. The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) notes that planning decisions should not attempt to impose architectural styles or particular tastes and they should not stifle innovation, originality or initiative through unsubstantiated requirements to conform to certain development forms or styles. However, it also emphasises the importance of securing high quality design, as does the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG), and notes that

development should respond to local character and add to the overall qualities of an area.

11. Similarly, there is nothing in the local planning policies and guidance to which the Council has referred that would preclude a design that does not just repeat local architectural styles. The Council's Supplementary Planning Document, *Purbeck District Design Guide* (SPD) states that contemporary designs that take inspiration from their surroundings in the creation of something new can equally contribute to local character. However, in doing so, new development should be interwoven into its context. Box 3 of the SPD, for instance, notes that the scale, mass and form of new development should be harmonious with neighbouring buildings and spaces.
12. Against that background, I conclude on the main issue that the proposed development would materially harm the character and appearance of the local area. Accordingly, it conflicts with Policy D of the Purbeck Local Plan Part 1: Planning Purbeck's Future (LP). This policy states that development should positively integrate with its surroundings. It would also be at odds with the Framework and the PPG for the reasons given.
13. That parts of the existing building are in poor condition and in need of repair is not in doubt. However, there is nothing before me to indicate that the deficiencies with the building could only be remedied by enlarging and altering it in the manner proposed.
14. The finished building would achieve a high standard of energy efficiency and thermal insulation, with an air source heat pump, a green roof system and solar panels all proposed. The extensive use of glazing and the roughly southerly aspect of the building would also offer an opportunity for passive solar gain. In moving to a low carbon future, the Framework supports new buildings that are energy efficient, as does LP Policy D and the Council's SPD. The proposal would also make an efficient use of the property with the accommodation provided contributing to a family home and enhancing the living conditions of its occupiers. These matters would provide some wider social and environmental benefits that weigh in support of the appellant's case. Developing the appeal scheme would also contribute to the local economy through the provision of jobs and the sale of construction materials. However, these considerations do not outweigh the harm that I have identified.
15. I note that the proposal was refined in the light of advice from Officers prior to the determination of the application, which included a notable reduction in ridge height. Some representations support the proposal, to which I have had regard. The Officer's report also records the opinion of the Development Manager on the considerations cited to be 'finely balanced'.
16. Nevertheless, for the reasons set out above, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Gary Deane

INSPECTOR