

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 7 August 2017

by Martin Andrews MA(Planning) BSc(Econ) DipTP & DipTP(Dist) MRTPI

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

Decision date: 24 August 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/A1720/D/17/3175942

78 Blackbrook Park Avenue, Fareham PO15 5JW

- 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 Phillip Gleed against the decision of Fareham Borough Council.
 - The application, Ref. P/17/0209/FP, dated 22 February 2017, was refused by notice dated 7 April 2017.
 - The development proposed is extensions and alterations.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the streetscene of Blackbrook Park Avenue.

Reasons

3. I saw on my visit that the appeal property is one of a group of four bungalows on the northern side of Blackbrook Park Avenue. There is no particular uniformity in their design style, but in common with the majority of dwellings in the road they have brick elevations and tiled roofs. Taking the road as a whole, there are both bungalows and houses with a range of individual designs, but for the most part there is a street scene with a majority of 'traditional' pitched roof dwellings and elevations of facing brickwork.
 4. These characteristics apply to a number of newer developments in the road, some quite close to the appeal property and whilst I acknowledge that there is evidence of a more varied use of materials, as illustrated in the grounds of appeal, I consider that it is the more immediate context of No. 78 that should inform my Decision in this appeal.
 5. For this reason I attach only very limited weight to the characteristics of other roads in Fareham or to individual planning decisions relating to dwellings within them. The key consideration is whether the alterations and additions to No. 78 would be perceived as harmonious in relation to the dwellings on either side, in this case the group of four bungalows I have already referred to, which despite their differences in my view read together as a visually cohesive element of the street scene. This issue warrants far more attention than allegations of the Council's inconsistency in other planning decisions in the Borough.
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6. Given the visual coherence, the principle of converting a bungalow to a much larger two storey dwelling that would remain 'sandwiched' between two existing low profile bungalows and with all three buildings on sites of a fairly modest width – as is the case here – should not necessarily be accepted without careful thought. However, bearing in mind that there are both single and two storey dwellings and with varied designs already in Blackbrook Park Avenue, I consider this might well be acceptable, subject to satisfactory design details and external materials that are perceived as being harmonious with those of the neighbours.
7. With that said, the appeal scheme seeks to achieve much more than this, given its significantly different design of a flat roofed, rectilinear and rendered building with Art Deco styling. The Council has commented that in itself the design of the building is acceptable, with the complement that it is 'innovative' and 'commendable'. I endorse this assessment and take the view that the design is of a high standard in terms of both appearance and living space.
8. However in the context I have described, the altered building with its two storey height, radically different design and contrasting external materials to its neighbours would be perceived as being harmfully out of keeping with its immediate surroundings and draw the eye as a discordant element in this part of the street scene. Nor, because of the preponderance of traditional design with brick elevations in this section of the road, would the development be one of those cases where radically contrasting styles can sit comfortably together as part of a more diverse townscape. I would not entirely preclude the development of a dwelling of the type proposed in Blackbrook Park Avenue, but this would need to be on one of the larger plots that permit space and landscaping around the building rather than areas, including the appeal site, with a much closer and tightly knit grain of development.
9. The planning policy context for the appeal proposal includes Policy CS17 of the Fareham Core Strategy 2011 ('the Core Strategy') with its requirement for development to respond positively to, and be respectful of, the key characteristics of the area, and paragraph 60 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2012 ('the Framework'). The latter says on the one hand that planning policies and decisions should not seek unsubstantiated requirements for certain development forms or styles and on the other hand they should promote or reinforce local distinctiveness. I consider that in its handling of the appeal application the Council has found the correct balance between these potentially conflicting factors.
10. Overall, I conclude that the proposed extensions and alterations would have an unacceptably harmful effect on the character and appearance of the Blackbrook Park Avenue streetscene. This would conflict with Core Strategy Policy CS17 and with some elements of Section 7: 'Requiring Good Design' of the Framework. I have carefully considered all the other matters raised for the appellant in the grounds of appeal, including that some local residents support the scheme and also the view that the Council's handling of the application was flawed. However, I have found nothing of sufficient weight to alter my findings on the main issue. The appeal is therefore dismissed.

Martin Andrews

INSPECTOR