



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 22 October 2019 by Elizabeth Davies BSc (Hons) PIEMA

Decision by P J Davies BSc (Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 27 November 2019

Appeal Ref: APP/D3830/W/19/3232153

Bridge House, 62 St Wilfrids Road, Burgess Hill RH15 8BQ

- 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 D Andrews against the decision of Mid Sussex District Council.
 - The application Ref DM/19/0991, dated 11 March 2019, was refused by notice dated 29 May 2019.
 - The development proposed is conversion and extension of detached dwelling to form a pair of semi-detached houses.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Appeal Procedure

2. The site visit was undertaken by an Appeal Planning Officer whose recommendation is set out below and to which the Inspector has had regard before deciding the appeal.

Main Issue

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

Reasons for the Recommendation

4. The appeal site currently contains a two storey detached dwelling with a large flat roofed garage, parking area and small front garden. There is a driveway on the eastern side of the appeal site leading to Bridge Cottage, beyond the access track to the east is an area of woodland. A public footpath extends beyond St Wilfrids Road in front of the appeal site, into the area of woodland. The appeal property has a large garden at the rear, it is understood that there is planning permission in place for construction of a detached dwelling in the garden.
5. The south side of St Wilfrids Road, where the appeal site is located, forms the prevailing built context in which the proposal would be seen. It is typically characterised by two storey detached, semi-detached and short terraces of dwellings. Although some design features and materials differ between properties along this side of the road, the semi-detached and short terraces of dwellings are generally symmetrical and feature similar design and materials in their pairs and groups. These characteristics provide a uniform and legible

appreciation of the housing pattern. The appeal property is generally typical of the style and scale of detached dwelling on the south side of the road and adds positively to the character and appearance of the area. The north side of the road by contrast features detached chalet bungalows and has a markedly different character and appearance. Nonetheless these have their own distinctiveness and do not unduly influence the individual context of the appeal property that I have described.

6. The proposal includes a side gable extension which would follow the form and materials of the existing house and maintain the visual balance. However, given the narrow width of the plot, the side / rear extension would be orientated at an unnatural angle to the resulting dwelling. Although it would be lower in height and set back, its awkward juxtaposition would result in an unbalanced pair of dwellings that would diminish the harmonious relationship of the existing dwelling with the street scene. It is not disputed that the proposal would allow for adequate garden space and some sense of space would be maintained by the driveway and woodland to the east of the appeal site. However, the proximity of the development to the side boundary would result in a visually dominant two storey wall which would appear imposing in views from the access road. I have had regard to the generally close-knit development pattern that typifies the area but the proximity of the development to the boundary in this case would be correlated with the incongruous appearance of the development. These factors in combination would give the impression of a dwelling shoehorned into the constrained width of the site. Whilst the proposal seeks to optimise the site in line with policies that seek the efficient use of land, especially within settlements, the consequence would be a visually contrived form of development. Notwithstanding limited views of the proposal, which in any event should not justify unsatisfactory design, this is a compelling consideration that weighs heavily against the development.
7. I note that roof tiles and brick to match the existing dwelling would be used in the new dwelling, and I acknowledge that the proposed painted timber cladding at 1st floor level is intended to distinguish the extension and help to make it visually subservient. However, given the unbalanced appearance of the development and its cramped siting, the contrast in materials would stand out and exacerbate the visual harm that I have identified. The appellant has provided an example of a timber clad house on Mill Road, however, the example provided is of a detached dwelling in a different location and therefore the circumstances are not comparable to this case.
8. I conclude that the proposed development would have a harmful effect on the character and appearance of the area. This would be contrary to Policy DP26 of the Mid Sussex District Plan 2014-2031 (March 2018) which, amongst other things, seeks to ensure that all development is of high quality design and layout.

Other Matters

9. The Council confirms that it is able to demonstrate a five year supply of housing land and this is not disputed by the appellant. In accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework, the Development Plan policies have been found to be up to date and it has been demonstrated above that the proposal would not accord with Policy DP26. It is acknowledged that the proposal is

located within a Category 1 settlement, close to public transport and within walking and cycling distance of various services. Nonetheless the addition of one dwelling would make only a modest contribution to the housing stock and would have small scale economic benefits in terms of the investment in construction and local employment during the construction process. The harm to the character and appearance of the area would however be significant and as a result the environmental role of sustainable development would not be achieved.

10. I have considered the general acceptability of the proposal regarding a number of planning matters including living conditions of neighbours and future occupiers, highway safety, car and bicycle parking, energy efficiency, drainage and flood risk, and that no adverse impact on the Ashdown Forest Special Protection Area and Special Area of Conservation has been identified. However, the lack of harm in these respects carries neutral weight and would not positively outweigh the identified harm.

Conclusion and Recommendation

11. For the reasons given above, and having had regard to all other matters raised, I recommend that the appeal is dismissed.

Elizabeth Davies

APPEAL PLANNING OFFICER

Inspector's Decision

12. I have considered all the submitted evidence and the Appeal Planning Officer's report and on that basis the appeal is dismissed.

P J Davies

INSPECTOR