
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 4 February 2020

by Benjamin Webb BA(Hons) MA MA MSc PGDip(UD) MRTPI IHBC

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 11 February 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/Y1110/D/19/3240792

85 Newcourt Road, Topsham, EX3 0BU

- 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 Parry against the decision of Exeter City Council.
 - The application Ref 19/1037/FUL, dated 30 July 2019, was refused by notice dated 13 September 2019.
 - The development proposed is described as ground and roof extensions to an existing bungalow.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The effect of the development on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

3. No 85 is located within a row of single storey bungalows. One of these bungalows has had small dormers inserted on its front elevation, however the rest remain appreciably single storey viewed from the street. All are modest in scale and massing, with similar eaves line and little apparent variation in ridge height. Building forms predominantly feature compositions based on use of hipped roofs, with subservient gables an occasional feature, seen for example at the appeal site. Notwithstanding the often close spacing of these bungalows, the gaps between them broaden with height, as roofs are hipped or pitched in opposing directions to either side. This allows individual dwellings to remain visually distinct, and softens the perception of frontage density, whilst also making an important contribution to the general sense of visual consistency, harmony and rhythm between the bungalows as a group. This is not diminished in any way by the presence of 2-storey dwellings further along the road.
4. The development would see a first floor of accommodation added, as well as some enlargement at ground floor level. The works would essentially involve remodelling the building, to the extent that its external appearance would bear little resemblance to the existing bungalow, or indeed to those adjacent.
5. A gable would be introduced facing towards 83 Newcourt Road. This gable would appear appreciably at odds with the general pattern of opposing roof slopes. It would also result in significant reduction of the gap between Nos 85 and 83, given the substantial loss of space between the two roofs. The effect would be accentuated by the already tight spacing between the bungalows at

- ground floor level, and by the increased height and massing of No 85, and would cause Nos 83 and 85 to appear atypically cramped.
6. I acknowledge the appellant's point that No 85 is more modest in scale than neighbouring bungalows, and that the height of its ridge is lower. The perceived differences are however slight, and far less pronounced than those which would exist between No 85 and its neighbours if the proposed development took place. Indeed, the mass of the much enlarged building would appear much greater than that of Nos 83 and 87 Newcourt Road. The contrast would be especially apparent and unsympathetic viewed approaching the site from the north, as from here the long ridge and rectilinear form of the side elevation would be viewed relative to the much less bulky hipped roof form of No 87.
 7. The difference between No 85, its neighbours, and other bungalows in the row would otherwise be made both visually obvious, and stark by introduction of large windows at roof level, as too a significantly higher eaves line. These differences would, in combination with the points outlined above, cause the bungalow to appear incongruous within the streetscene.
 8. The Council's reasons for refusal partly relate to materials, and the suggested use of synthetic timber cladding. Indeed, this cladding is not a typical feature of dwellings within the immediate streetscene, and its use would further emphasise other ways in which the development would appear atypical. This matter could however be addressed by the imposition of a suitably worded condition.
 9. The development would involve modernisation which would include making the dwelling more energy efficient, and provision of floor space more closely aligned with the Nationally Described Space Standard (NDSS). There is however no requirement for existing dwellings to meet the NDSS, and I have no reason to believe that appeal scheme represents the only way in which these objectives could be met. Their achievement in the context of the proposed development would not otherwise outweigh the harm that it would cause to the character and appearance of the area. In this regard the National Design Guide, taken as a whole, cannot be considered to provide any additional support for the scheme.
 10. The appellant states that bungalow could be enlarged by exercising permitted development rights. Be that as it may, I have not been provided with any evidence to substantiate the claim that doing so would provide a less attractive and neighbourly outcome than the proposed scheme. It does not therefore alter my view of the merits of the appeal scheme.
 11. My attention has been drawn to the fact that the Exeter Local Plan First Review 2005 (the LP) is now 15 years old. It thus pre-dates adoption of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework). However, I see no fundamental conflict between the general design objectives set out in saved Policy DG1, and those outlined in the Framework.
 12. For the reasons outlined above I conclude that the development would cause unacceptable harm to the character and appearance of the area, conflicting with Policy CP17 of the Exeter City Council Core Strategy 2012 (the CS), which requires development to complement or enhance Exeter's character, and reflects Objective 9 of the CS which seeks to achieve excellence in design; and

saved Policy DG1 of the LP, which amongst other things requires that the height, volume and shape of development relates well, and is appropriate to surrounding townscape, and contributes positively to the visual richness and amenity of the townscape.

Conclusion

13. For the reasons set out above I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Benjamin Webb

INSPECTOR