

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 5 February 2021

by C Jack BSc MATP MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 12 February 2021.

Appeal Ref: APP/Y9507/D/20/2363668

20 The Brow, Friston, Eastbourne BN20 0ES

- 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 Paul Hill against the decision of South Downs National Park Authority.
 - The application Ref SDNP/20/01228/HOUS, dated 9 March 2020, was refused by notice dated 7 October 2020.
 - The development proposed is to construct a new garage, demolish existing single garage.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matter

2. I saw that some work has commenced, including removal of the previous single garage, excavation, a concrete slab, and partial construction of a block retaining wall. While the description of the development is for a new garage, it is clear from the plans and documents that a repositioned drive and access onto The Brow were part of the application before the Authority, and I have considered the appeal on that basis.

Main Issue

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

Reasons

4. 20 The Brow is a detached dwelling with first floor accommodation in the roof space and an eyebrow dormer at the front. It is situated within the South Downs National Park in a private residential estate comprised mainly of large, detached homes in a mixed array of sizes, styles and materials. Trees and hedges are common in the streetscape, and a number of properties nearby have garages clearly visible from the road, including some examples set forward of the associated dwelling albeit generally with reasonable separation or off-setting from the principal elevation of the house.
5. The proposed garage would be significantly less prominent in the street scene than many of these examples, principally because it would be set well below the road at a similar level to the ground floor of No 20. As a result, the garage would be minimally visible in views taken along the street from either direction. It would also be almost entirely screened from wider views, including from nearby downland.

6. However, the scale of the garage building relative to the house, taken with a separation of only around 1.5m from the front elevation, would have an adverse effect on the appearance of the site and the house in its immediate context. At ground floor level, the house has two main windows facing The Brow, the larger of which would be almost entirely obscured by the new garage even in oblique views. Notwithstanding its set down position, the garage would unduly dominate the principal elevation of No 20 when viewed from the road in front of the site, particularly given its proximity to the house and the larger front window.
7. This adverse effect on appearance would be exacerbated by the significant expanse of flat roof and parts of the blockwork retaining wall, which would be clearly visible from the road. Vegetation to screen and soften the development and support biodiversity has been suggested, albeit no significant details of either an additional hedge or a living roof are before me. While a roadside hedge would have potential to reduce the visual impact of the development by partially screening it from the road in front, the permanent retention of a hedge for this purpose cannot be relied upon, and it is unclear what form a living roof might take or whether it would be feasible here. Even with a roadside hedge, the scale and siting of the garage in relation to the house would be visible via the access. I note that the proposed brick arch would reflect other similar features in the area, and that materials are proposed to match the house as far as possible, but this is not sufficient to overcome the adverse effects of the relative scale, siting and dominance of the proposal.
8. I therefore conclude that the proposed development would harm the character and appearance of the local area, contrary to the relevant expectations of Policies SD1, SD4, SD5 and SD31 of the South Downs Local Plan 2014-2033 and the first purpose of the National Park.

Other Matters

9. No particular concern has been raised to the relocation of the drive and access onto The Brow, and nothing in the evidence leads me to a different conclusion on that aspect of the proposal. While there is limited lighting and no general off-road parking nearby, I saw that most properties have private off-road parking facilities, and that visibility along this part of the road is generally good. Furthermore, there is no significant evidence of previous road safety issues before me; very little on street parking was taking place locally during my visit, albeit this was only a snapshot in time; and there was very little passing traffic with the site being situated towards the end of a no-through residential road. Therefore, while there may be some benefit in additional off-road parking and garage space being provided at No 20, the effect on safety would be very modest. Bat boxes may also have some biodiversity benefit, but this is also likely to be very modest in relation to the nature and location of the development proposed. My findings in relation to character and appearance are therefore not outweighed by these limited benefits.

Conclusion

10. For the reasons given, the appeal is dismissed.

Catherine Jack

INSPECTOR