
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 9 February 2021

by S Leonard BA (Hons) BTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 17 February 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/Z1775/D/20/3263113

1 Fourth Avenue, Portsmouth PO6 3HX

- 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 David Alvarez against the decision of Portsmouth City Council.
 - The application Ref 20/00389/HOU, dated 23 March 2020, was refused by notice dated 27 October 2020.
 - The development proposed is two storey front extension.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the impact of the proposal on the character and appearance of the host property and the surrounding area.

Reasons

3. The appeal property comprises a two-storey house located on the west side of Fourth Avenue in an established residential area. It has a part hipped and part pitched tiled roof above a mix of brick and pebble-dash finished walls.
4. Although not yet constructed, the evidence before me is that a Lawful Development Certificate has been granted in January 2020 for a single storey rear extension, which is shown on the proposed scheme on the planning application drawings. The Council has confirmed that it did not consider this extension as part of the planning application, and I have dealt with the appeal accordingly.
5. Fourth Avenue is a short, straight residential road, comprising pairs of houses with symmetrically designed front elevations and arranged in either semi-detached pairs or terraces of four. There is a regular front building line on both sides of the street, with houses set back behind either open frontages or low front boundary walls/fences/hedges. As such, a consistent rhythm of built development characterises the townscape of the road.
6. Built structures to the fronts of the houses are limited to single storey porch-style additions, which are positioned off the set-back hipped roof part of the houses. These extensions appear subsidiary in scale and appearance to their host properties, and do not significantly alter the overall symmetry of the fronts of the pairs of houses. The original two storey front gable projections

remain visually dominant, with set-back hipped roof elements to each side, within which the property front doors are usually situated.

7. The appeal property is typical of the prevailing property design, sharing a pitched roof, front facing gabled projection with the adjacent property at No.3. Another, similarly-designed pair of properties complete the terrace of 4 houses. Notwithstanding a mix of facing materials and front porch designs, the terrace as a whole has retained a strong sense of symmetry. Whilst not completely identical, the houses present a strong, regular rhythm of development to the site frontage, in keeping with the other houses on both sides of the road. This stems from their similar height, scale, roof form, front gabled projection, contrasting ground and first floor wall finishes, fenestration positioning, and siting in relation to the street. As such, the appeal property makes a positive contribution to the distinctive characteristics of the Fourth Avenue townscape, as viewed from the public realm.
8. The appeal scheme, by filling in the recessed area at the front of the dwelling at a full two-storey height, would notably unbalance the symmetry of the building as a whole and undermine the established form of built development which characterises the street. The proposed pitched roof form, adding a roof valley at the front and having a ridge height which does not match either of the existing roof ridge heights, would introduce an uncharacteristically complex roof element into the existing simple roof lines which are a feature of the front elevation of the building and houses in the road as whole. The resulting double-pitched roof form would be at odds with the established roof form of the street scene.
9. The scale of the proposal is such that it would visually compete with the adjacent front gable feature of the building. It would also introduce a more horizontal emphasis to the front of the appeal property, due to its width being greater than that of the existing front projecting part of the appeal property, together with the horizontal banding of ground and first floor wall finishes across the front of the dwelling. The moving of the front door to the forwardmost part of the front wall would also be out of keeping with the established set-back front entrance position which is typical of the street.
10. As such, due to its combined height, width, roof form and alignment with the forwardmost part of the existing building, the appeal scheme would appear as a discordant and unduly visually prominent addition to the front of the house. It would significantly change the original character of the building, rather than being perceived as a subsequent subservient extension to the building.
11. This would detract from the appearance of the property when viewed within the context of the streetscape, harmfully eroding the established pattern of built development along both sides of the road to the detriment of the visual amenities of the street scene.
12. The appellant has drawn my attention to a similar front extension that has been constructed close to the appeal site. I have not been provided with details of the planning history of that development. However, on my site visit, I observed that the townscape context of that extension, including its juxtaposition in relation to Fourth Avenue and the similarly designed properties that front this road, is not directly comparable to that of the appeal proposal. The extension relates to a semi-detached corner property, having less of a direct visual presence within the Fourth Avenue street scene than the appeal

property, and being visually prominent within the townscape of Medina Road, where there is a greater variety of dwelling designs.

13. I must determine the appeal proposal on its individual planning merits and within the context of the character and appearance of the existing building and the stretch of Fourth Avenue within which it is located. The existence of the other two storey extension does not justify the harm that I have found.
14. For the above reasons, I conclude that the appeal proposal would cause significant harm to the character and appearance of the host property and the wider surrounding area. It would therefore be contrary to Policy PCS23 of the *Portsmouth Plan* (2012), which, amongst other matters, requires new development to be well-designed, and seeks excellent architectural quality with respect to changes to existing buildings, with regard being paid to achieving appropriate scale and appearance for a particular context.
15. For similar reasons, the proposal would also be contrary to Policies of the *National Planning Policy Framework* (2019), which seek to secure high quality design as set out in Chapter 12.

Other Matters

16. Whilst the proposal may result in an increase in the diversity of housing in the area, this does not outweigh the harm to the character and appearance of the host property and the surrounding area that I have identified.
17. I acknowledge the appellant's view that the proposal would help stimulate the current market. However, this does not justify the aforementioned harm.

Conclusion

18. For the reasons given above, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

S Leonard

INSPECTOR