
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: 18 February 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/A1720/W/20/3262773

87 Highfield Avenue, Fareham PO14 1HX

- 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 John Warner against the decision of Fareham Borough Council.
 - The application Ref P/20/0741/FP, dated 7 July 2020, was refused by notice dated 14 September 2020.
 - The development proposed is single storey self-contained annex to the side and rear, for dwelling for 2 family members.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Application for costs

2. An application for costs was made by John Warner against Fareham Borough Council. This application is the subject of a separate decision.

Procedural Matter

3. The description of development in the header above comprises the first line of the description in the application form. In the interests of brevity, I have omitted the subsequent construction and layout details of the scheme.

Main Issue

4. The main issue is the impact of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

5. The appeal site is located on the northern side of Highfield Avenue, within an established residential area in Fareham. The road includes a variety of dwelling types. The appeal property comprises one half of a semi-detached pair of two-storey houses, with brick walls under a tiled hipped roof. To the east of the site is a row of 6 semi-detached bungalows. The remainder of the street is characterised by two-storey terraced housing. Dwellings, including the appeal property, are traditional in design, and include a variety of brick, render and tile hanging wall finishes, and hipped and pitched tiled roofs.
6. The appeal property, together with its semi-detached neighbour, stand out within this part of the street-scene, as the only semi-detached houses amongst bungalows and terraced houses. The building as a whole is visually prominent in views from the street, given the low front boundary walls. Both houses have

- a low-roofed, single garage to the side. The garages, due to their size, design and position, do not visually compete with the main building. As such, the two houses exhibit a strong sense of symmetry of design, which is supported by the small-scale garages to each side.
7. Other detached outbuildings are also evident on the same side of the street within this stretch of the road. These also comprise domestic scale garages, which appear as subsidiary outbuildings to dwellings, often set back towards the rear of sites, and they do not have an unduly visually prominent impact on the townscape. These include two detached garages to the west of No.89 and a garage to the rear of No.85.
 8. The appeal proposal would replace the existing garage with a substantially larger and higher building, positioned further forward on the site, and extending across a large part of the existing grassed side garden area, resulting in a significant reduction in the space between the host property and the adjacent bungalow at No.85.
 9. The proposed building footprint would be almost as large as that of the neighbouring bungalow. The building depth would be greater than that of the bungalow, and this depth would be visually apparent from the public realm due to the open nature of the boundary between the appeal site and No.85.
 10. The proposed width of the new building would be greater than that of the set-back part of the host property, and its eaves height would be comparable with that of the neighbouring bungalow. As such, these factors, notwithstanding the two-storey height of the host property and the set-back position of the proposed annex, would serve to reduce the perceived subservience of the proposal in relation to the host property, as viewed from the street.
 11. Furthermore, notwithstanding its proposed use as an annex, the new building would have the appearance of a separate dwelling when viewed from the street, due to its combined footprint, height, roof form and fenestration design, which includes a front-facing entrance door and window. As such, given its detached dwelling style external character, together with its siting, which does not accord with the front or rear building lines of the pairs of properties to both sides, the proposal would appear at odds with the prevailing layout of dwellings within this part of the road.
 12. Accordingly, the proposal would introduce an incongruous form of development, which would be at odds with the established pattern of semi-detached houses and bungalows with subservient outbuildings to the side/rear, which characterises this part of the street. Due to its combined height, mass, scale, design and position on the site, the appeal scheme would relate poorly to, and assume an unduly visually prominent and discordant appearance in relation to, the host property and the neighbouring bungalow at No.85. As such, it would detract from the visual amenities of the townscape.
 13. For the above reasons, I conclude that the proposal would cause significant harm to the character and appearance of the area. It would therefore be contrary to Policy CS17 of the *Fareham Local Development Framework Core Strategy* (2011) and Policy DSP46 of the *Fareham Local Plan Part 2: Development Sites and Policies* (2015). These policies, amongst other things, seek to ensure that new development is of a high-quality design, and that

annexes respond positively to, and are respectful of, the key characteristics of the area, including scale, form and spaciousness.

14. For similar reasons, the proposal would also be contrary to Policies of the *National Planning Policy Framework* (2019) (the Framework), which seek to secure high quality design as set out in Chapter 12.

Other Matters

15. The appellant has provided me with detailed information in respect of pre-application advice received from the Council. However, I am not bound by the advice given by the Council prior to the submission of the planning application and it does not alter or outweigh my conclusion on the main issue.
16. The appellant has referred me to the Council's procedures during the determination of the planning application, including consultation with neighbours, and to on-going correspondence between the appellant and the case officer prior to the refusal of the planning application, which led to amendments to the originally submitted plans. These are not matters for consideration as part of this appeal, which I must determine on the merits of the scheme before me.
17. As such, whilst the amendments to the scheme prior to application submission and during the course of the determination of the application have been noted, including changing from a log cabin to containers, and changes to the proposed wall treatment, this does not alter my findings with respect to the appeal proposal.
18. I have noted the lack of objection to the proposal from the neighbouring occupiers at 85 and 89 Highfield Avenue and other neighbour support for the scheme. However, this does not outweigh or justify the aforementioned harm that I have identified in respect of the main issue.
19. Whilst I have given careful consideration to the appellant's need to provide more living space on the appeal site, I am mindful of the advice contained in Planning Practice Guidance¹ that, in general, planning is concerned with land use in the public interest. It is also probable that the proposed development would remain long after the current personal circumstances cease to be material. For these reasons, I therefore find that this factor is not sufficient to outweigh the harm that would be caused contrary to the Local Plan and the Framework.
20. Whilst the proposal represents a cost-effective and innovative design solution, and incorporates sustainable construction elements, these factors are not sufficient to outweigh or justify the harm I have identified.
21. Although the Council has raised no objection having regard to the living conditions of neighbouring occupiers and parking/highway safety, these are requirements of the development plan in any case, and do not outweigh my conclusions on the main issue.

Conclusion

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

¹ Paragraph 008 Reference ID 21b-008-20140306 – 'What is a material planning consideration?'

S Leonard

INSPECTOR