

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 10 January 2024

by **D Cramond** BSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 7th February 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/D3830/D/23/3332694

Barrington House, Portsmouth Wood Drive, Lindfield, Haywards Heath, RH16 2DW

- 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 Weeden against the decision of Mid Sussex District Council.
 - The application Ref DM/23/0632, dated 6 March 2023, was refused by notice dated 26 September 2023.
 - The development proposed is a new 1 bedroom, 2 storey family annex for elderly relative use, accessed from existing private driveway of main house, adjacent to existing garage building. Proposed revised roof and windows to existing garage. Drainage strategy report and details received 29.06.2023.
-

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the host property and the locality.

Reasons

Character and appearance

3. The appeal site is the side garden area of one of the dwellings which forms Barrington House. Barrington House is an elevated grand property in a locality which is generally spacious and verdant albeit nearby is a higher density cluster of single storey buildings which are low-key visually. The character of the area is formed from all of this and the locality has a very pleasing appearance. The appeal scheme is as described above and is built around modifying and extending an existing two storey garage with floorspace over.
 4. The Council indicates that it considers Barrington House to be a non-designated heritage asset (NDHA). I have not seen any confirmation of this via up-to-date information which might be available to the public nor any schedule provided in evidence and the Appellant points out that the property has not been cited as such during planning history less than ten years ago. I have little corroborated information before me and for the purpose of this appeal I am not going to class the property as an NHDA. What is clear however is that Barrington House, even as divided and extended, and with appreciable grounds removed, is a fine property, relatively old for the area, and one which deserves spatial and aesthetic consideration when a curtilage scheme is proposed.
-

5. I understand the approach taken to generate ancillary accommodation with the wish to make some use of the current garage structure. Regrettably, to my mind the scheme would almost appear as a new house; and one of, at best, unremarkable design. It would be set too near the road and in the process of its construction would remove excessive vegetation and end up being positioned uncomfortably close to nearby trees. The scale and style of built form would detract from the visual merits of Barrington House and add nothing positive to the local scene. Unfortunately, the scheme would look alien in its immediate and wider context and its incongruity would be ill at ease on the eye. It would detract from the qualities of the host building, the streetscene, and the character of the locality.
6. Policies DP26 and DP37 of the Mid Sussex District Plan are relevant. Taken together and amongst other matters they seek to ensure that new development is of high-quality design and would: safeguard local distinctiveness and street scenes; protect gardens that contribute to local character; and limit losses to trees and hedgerows in the interests of visual amenity. For the reasons given above I conclude that the appeal scheme would conflict with these policies.

Other matters

7. The Council's Decision Notice refers to concerns over surface water drainage. However, from what I have seen and read I would deem that had I been minded to allow the appeal I should have been able satisfactorily deal with the matter via planning condition and consequently conclude that pertinent development plan policies would not have been breached. Given my decision on the main issue I need not take this matter any further.
8. I sympathise with the Appellant's wish to provide accommodation for elderly relative use and I hope that a suitable solution can be found. I agree with the Appellant that the existing garage is a visual anomaly and not of particularly pleasing design. However, I am not persuaded that the appeal scheme overcomes that problem and it certainly would not be the only way to seek to tackle the strange front elevations and odd proportions which presently exist. I have carefully considered all the points raised by the Appellant but these matters do not outweigh the concerns which I have in relation to the main issue identified above.
9. I confirm that policies in the National Planning Policy Framework have been considered and the development plan policies which I cite mirror relevant objectives within that document.

Overall conclusion

10. For the reasons given above I conclude that the appeal proposal would have unacceptable adverse effects on the character and appearance of the host property and the locality. Accordingly, the appeal is dismissed.

D Cramond

INSPECTOR