



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 21 May 2024

by R Cahalane BA(Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 12 June 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/M1710/D/23/3335849

95 Mount Pleasant Road, Alton, Hampshire, GU34 2RT

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mr & Mrs Gary Martin against the decision of East Hampshire District Council.
 - The application Ref 30586/006, dated 07 August 2023, was refused by notice dated 10 October 2023.
 - The development proposed is a detached double garage with fitness room/home office over.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the appeal site and the surrounding area.

Reasons

3. The appeal site (No. 95) is located in a residential area, at the end of a small cul-de-sac beyond the junction of Mount Pleasant Road and New Barn Lane. The cul-de-sac links to a public footpath at its end, and there is also an adjacent footpath access to Ascot Close. There are a variety of dwelling types in the vicinity, with a range of age, scale and architectural style. Dwellings on higher ground within Ascot Close are two storey, with a more uniform design and higher density. The development pattern nearby along Mount Pleasant Road and New Barn Lane is mainly characterised by detached or semi-detached single to two storey dwellings that sit in relatively generous gardens. The looser-knit development pattern and views to surrounding vegetation give the Mount Pleasant Road environs a spacious and verdant character and appearance.
4. During my site visit, I noted a number of garages to the front of dwellings nearby, some with pitched roofs. However, the majority of garages I observed in the vicinity tended to be single storey, occupying modest footprint and therefore of a subservient form relative to the main dwellings. Consequently, the existing garages that I saw respect the host properties, the prevailing development pattern and generally open and spacious character of the area.
5. No. 95 comprises a two-storey semi-detached dwelling, which has a relatively open roadside frontage with space to the side and rear. The slightly inclining ground level towards the rear of the site, which, combined with a side gap and

open road frontage, contributes to an overall sense of spaciousness to the site and wider suburban context.

6. The appeal proposal would see the introduction of a detached garage within the gap to the side of no. 95. The proposed outbuilding would have a ridge height some 2m lower than No. 95 and would have a smaller footprint. Nevertheless, the proposed width would be significant in comparison to this existing dwelling and although there would be gaps either side, it would in effect fill the open gap to the side of the property. Although the proposed roof would slope away from the main dwelling, it would have a wide and full-gabled frontage, with a high eaves level necessitated by the proposed first-floor accommodation. Irrespective of whether garages commonly provide incidental accommodation in the roof void, and that the design is intended to meet the requirements of the Council's Vehicle Parking Standards SPD (2018), the overall scale and form of the proposed outbuilding would cause it to dominate the site and appear incongruous in relation to the form of the host dwelling.
7. The appeal proposal would be sited so that the front elevation of the main dwelling would limit views on approach along Mount Pleasant Road. However, even if frontage planting might mature over time, the impact of the outbuilding would be appreciable from the immediate frontage of No. 95, and from nearby footpaths. Even with the use of sympathetic materials, and screened to some extent by other buildings and extensions, the overall design and bulk of the proposed outbuilding relative to the plot means it would dominate the site and appear uncomfortably squeezed in. The proposed outbuilding would also be significantly larger than any of the detached garages and outbuildings in the vicinity, thereby being further at odds within the surrounding context.
8. Overall, I find that the proposed development would harm the character and appearance of the appeal site and the surrounding area. The proposed development would be contrary to Policy CP29 of the East Hampshire District Local Plan Joint Core Strategy (2014), and Policy DE2 of the Alton Neighbourhood Plan (2021), insofar as they require development to respect the character, identity and context of the district's towns and to be of appropriate appearance, size and scale to its locality. The proposal also fails to satisfy the guidance in the Council's Residential Extensions & Householder Development Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) (2018), insofar as it requires outbuildings to be subordinate to the main dwelling and respect the scale and character of the existing residential building. Conflict also arises with the National Planning Policy Framework (revised 2023), which seeks to ensure that developments add to the overall quality of the area, are visually attractive, and are sympathetic to the surrounding built environment.

Other Matters

9. It is not in dispute that the appeal site is located where the principle of the proposed development is normally acceptable and would not have a harmful impact in respect of neighbours' living conditions or highways. I also note that neither the Town Council nor a neighbour with a direct view have objected, and that the Council has granted planning permission for two storey development on the appeal site, and the neighbouring plot (LPA Ref: 52300). These are all neutral considerations that do not weigh in favour of the proposal nor justify the harm it would cause.

10. The point is made within the appellants' statement that under permitted development (PD) rights, a sizable outbuilding could be erected on the appeal site in a similar location, with the same or larger footprint, and similar overall height. Even if the possibility of a fallback under PD rights exists, without drawings I cannot usefully compare the appeal proposal, nor judge whether it would have a lesser impact on the character and appearance of the area. It is also not clear whether the type of development that could be achieved under PD would apply to provision of an additional floor. I therefore do not consider that the potential for a fallback outbuilding outweighs the harm I have identified in this case.
11. The Officer Report refers to a storage container on the appeal site being unauthorised. I saw the container was visible at the time of my visit, which is also outlined on the proposed block/site plans. However, as the Council did not assess the storage container within its officer report and I am dismissing the appeal based on the harm the proposed garage outbuilding would cause, the container has not formed part of my decision making. Nor has the matter of CIL charging.

Conclusion

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

R Cahalane

INSPECTOR