The Planning Inspectorate

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 4 September 2018

by David Fitzsimon MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 18th September 2018

Appeal Ref: APP/B3438/D/18/3206875
Meadow View, Well Lane, Gillow Heath ST8 6QU

- 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 Gibson against the decision of Staffordshire Moorlands District Council.
- The application Ref SMD/2018/0236, dated 10 April 2018, was refused by notice dated 14 June 2018.
- The development proposed is 'single storey rear extension to existing lounge. Alterations to existing roof to raise ridge height and provide room-in-the-roof accommodation. New vehicular access point from Well Lane and minor alterations to existing levels inside site to provide new garage below existing property'.

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue in the case is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the street scene.

Reasons

3. The appeal relates to a detached bungalow which sits in an elevated position in relation to the highway, with an open frontage. The Council raises no objection to the proposed rear extension or raising the ridge height of the bungalow. Given the range of dwelling sizes and styles on this side of Well Lane, I have no reason to disagree.

4. The existing dwelling has a detached garage at its side which is served by a driveway which rises from the highway. The proposed scheme would enlarge the existing dwelling and would include an integral basement garage. Extensive excavation and engineering works would be required to construct the garage and the driveway with a gradient falling from the highway to service it.

5. The falling driveway arrangement proposed would be in stark contrast to the level or gently rising driveways serving the majority of the other properties within this part of Well Lane, which are a noticeable element of the street scene.

6. The excavated driveway would enable cars to be parked at a much lower ground level than the current driveway, but to my mind, the existing parking arrangements are not incongruous in the context of this suburban location. Whilst the garage itself would be set back from the highway, the excavated driveway would be readily visible from the public domain, from where it would appear noticeably out of keeping with the driveway arrangements of the surrounding dwellings. As a result, I consider that the overall character and appearance of the street scene would be unduly harmed, irrespective of the fact that it does not benefit from any special designation.

7. The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) advises that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development. For the reasons explained above, I find that the proposal would unacceptably harm the character and appearance of the street scene and it would fail to reinforce local distinctiveness. On this basis, it does not amount to good design and therefore it cannot amount to sustainable development in the widest sense of the definition provided by the Framework. Accordingly, the proposal conflicts with the Framework and policies SS1, SS1a and DC1 of the adopted Staffordshire Moorlands Core Strategy Development Plan Document, which seek to secure high quality, sustainable development that responds well to its surroundings.

Other matters

8. I accept the proposal raises no highway safety concerns. It would not harm the living conditions of the occupiers of neighbouring dwellings either and I note it has not generated any formal objections from third parties, including Biddulph Town Council. However, these are neutral factors which do not outweigh the visual harm I have identified.

9. The appellant also asserts that the proposed development would create additional living accommodation which would maximise the use of a residential site in a sustainable location. However, in the absence of any compelling arguments to the contrary, I see no reason why it would not be possible to increase the level of accommodation at the property without harming the character and appearance of the street scene.

Overall Conclusion

10. I conclude that the proposal would harm the character and appearance of the street scene contrary to the national and development plan policy outlined above. The arguments advanced by the appellant in favour of the scheme do not outweigh this harm and policy conflict therefore the appeal does not succeed.

David Fitzsimon

INSPECTOR