



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 19 March 2013

by H Lock BA (Hons) DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government

Decision date: 12 April 2013

Appeal Ref: APP/Q1445/A/12/2183927

2 Longhill Road (Land Adjacent), Ovingdean, Brighton, BN2 7BE

- 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 D Thompson against the decision of Brighton & Hove City Council.
 - The application Ref BH2012/01652, dated 28 May 2012, was refused by notice dated 4 September 2012.
 - The development proposed is the erection of a new two storey dwelling.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matters

2. The site address is given as 2a Longhill Road on the planning application form, but 2 Longhill Road (land adjacent) on the appeal form. As the latter reflects the address on the Council's decision notice, I have taken the address from the appeal form.
3. Planning permission was granted for the construction of a two-storey house with new access off Longhill Road under appeal ref. APP/Q1445/A/06/2031544. The Council's Committee report indicates that the permission has been implemented, and there is a building under construction on the site. Full plans of the approved scheme have not been submitted as part of this appeal, but the proposed plans indicate that the schemes differ in footprint. Notwithstanding that a building is under construction, I have determined this appeal on the basis of the proposed plans.

Main Issue

4. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the street scene and the wider area, including the South Downs National Park.

Reasons

5. The appeal site is former garden land to 2 Longhill Road, and is prominently located in an elevated position overlooking the South Downs National Park (SDNP). The site is adjacent to a driveway leading to a neighbouring dwelling,
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and beyond is a public footpath and the SDNP. The design and form of buildings in the vicinity is varied, but with a few exceptions they are designed with some form of pitched roof, albeit the roofscape is not uniform.

6. The approved dwelling was described as 'modernistic' by the previous Inspector, with a striking building form which would be in tune with the coastal elements, firmly related to its location. The Inspector considered that the building would add interest and distinctiveness to the local vistas and skyline due to its landmark style and design. The Council's Committee report indicates that the approved dwelling appeared predominantly as a single storey dwelling with accommodation in the roof.
7. Policy QD1 of the Brighton & Hove Local Plan 2005 (LP) discourages the replication of existing styles in areas without a distinctive historic style of architecture, and the supporting text indicates that modern designs will be welcomed. However, the proposed building would not respect the scale of nearby buildings due to its flat-roofed form and mass at first-floor level. Whilst I acknowledge that the proposed building would be of comparable overall height to neighbouring dwellings, these incorporate pitched roofs which minimise their bulk. Although parts of the proposed upper floor would be recessed, glazed and at staggered heights, this would not dissolve the mass of the structure, as suggested by the appellant.
8. Rather than being striking, the proposal would appear unacceptably dominant and bulky in this prominent position at the edge of the residential area. Its scale and mass would not be mitigated by its height, as the building would be highly visible in the street scene and in wider views across the open SDNP. Although the sustainable design and materials are acknowledged, the proposed cladding and fenestration pattern would exacerbate the stark contrast with other buildings in the vicinity. Whilst a contemporary building would be acceptable in principle, this particular design and form would appear incongruous in its setting, and would not secure the transition between the residential area and the SDNP indicated by the appellant. The proposed detailed planting scheme would not address the wider visual impact on the street scene, and would not secure the attractive frontage sought by LP Policy QD5.
9. The National Planning Policy Framework states that great weight should be given to conserving landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which have the highest status of protection in relation to landscape and scenic beauty. The SDNP is notable for its openness in contrast to the residential area of Ovingdean which it adjoins. However, whilst the proposal would be visible from the SDNP, the building would be viewed more in the context of surrounding residential properties, and with this backdrop would not detract from the setting of the SDNP. I do not find any conflict in this regard with LP Policy NC8, but this would not override the requirement for the proposal to take account of the local characteristics of its residential setting, as sought by LP Policy QD2, particularly given the conspicuous position of the site.
10. I therefore conclude that the proposal would be detrimental to the character and appearance of the street scene and the residential area within which it is set, contrary to the aims of LP Policies QD1, QD2 and QD5.

Other Matters

11. The proposed building would be sited further from the boundary with 2 Longhill Road than the approved scheme, but as this relationship between buildings has already been considered acceptable, this relocation would not justify acceptance of the appeal scheme.
12. Local residents have expressed concern about the effect of the proposal on highway and pedestrian safety, but in the absence of any technical evidence to demonstrate specific hazards I find the proposal to be acceptable in this regard.

Conclusion

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

Hilary Lock

INSPECTOR

