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## Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 6 November 2017

**by Martin Andrews MA(Planning) BSc(Econ) DipTP & DipTP(Dist) MRTPI**

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

**Decision date: 16 November 2017**

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### **Appeal Ref: APP/Q1445/D/17/3178262**

### **17 Founthill Avenue, Saltdean, Brighton BN2 8AW**

- 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 Gareth Thomas against the decision of Brighton & Hove City Council.
  - The application, Ref. BH2017/00794, dated 7 March 2017, was refused by notice dated 3 May 2017.
  - The development proposed is a two storey extension to the lower ground floor and ground floor, and removal of the existing pitched roof to facilitate the erection of an additional storey with a flat roof.
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### **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 area.

### **Reasons**

3. I saw on my visit that the development pattern in this part of Saltdean is for the most part one of conventional 20<sup>th</sup> century detached dwellings, albeit as in the case of the appeal property often split level because of the fall in the land and in other cases with some adaptation to take advantage of the views to the east. At present No. 17 is set down into its site, and combined with its unexceptional design this results in it being unassertive in either the Lenham Avenue or Founthill Avenue street scenes.
  4. The officer's report explains that the requirement in Policy QD14 of the Brighton & Hove Local Plan (retained policies March 2016) for extensions or alterations to existing buildings to be well designed, sited and detailed in relation to the host property, adjoining properties and the surrounding area does not in principle preclude a modern design approach through contemporary remodelling. From my visit to the area I agree that this approach is reasonable in the locality and in any event is consistent with Government policy in paragraph 60 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2012 ('the Framework').
  5. However, the thrust of the Council's objection to the appeal application is that through a combination of its size and design the altered building would be harmfully overbearing and dominant. Apart from responding to these points the
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grounds of appeal take issue in technical terms with the description 'ill-sited', but my interpretation of this criticism is that the context of the appeal site is unsuitable for the radical nature of the proposed alterations.

6. As regards the size of the extended dwelling it is clear from the submitted plans, in particular Drawing No. 15072-P-121, that the flat roof of the proposed additional storey would at 1.3m be noticeably above the ridge height of the existing roof. Furthermore, because a hipped roof is to be replaced with a flat roof the height differential would further increase through infilling the notional void to the existing eaves height, with a consequential enlargement of the building's bulk and mass.
7. This would not be offset by the very modest diminution of the existing house's built form in the area of the proposed balcony. I am therefore minded to agree with the Council's assessment that the height and form of the altered building and its prominence from Founthill Avenue and in the westward views from further down that road would give rise to a reasonable perception of an undue dominance of the plot.
8. The effect is likely to be somewhat less in views from Lenham Avenue because of the building's low siting in relation to the road. However, and as the Council also argues, this west elevation would have a poor appearance. This is because the fenestration would be more akin to that of a flank wall than an ostensibly principal elevation and would thereby detract from, rather than enhance, the street scene of that road.
9. The stepped form of the building, which the Council also dislikes, is an inherent part of the new design and serves the purpose of reducing the bulk and mass of the upper floors. Nor is it entirely unrelated to the topography. However, to the extent that it is derived from the additional storey it contributes to what I consider, overall, to be a justified basis for refusal.
10. I have carefully considered the grounds of appeal and acknowledge that the scheme has some merit, whereas the officer's report offers no concessions in its appraisal other than in relation to the 'impact on amenity'. However in my view, because the extensions and alterations are too ambitious for this particular dwelling and site and have at least some design deficiencies, the proposal would have a harmful effect on the character and appearance of the area. This would conflict with Local Plan Policy QD14 and some parts of Section 7: 'Requiring Good Design' of the Framework.
11. The appeal is therefore dismissed.

*Martin Andrews*

INSPECTOR