
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 8 November 2016

by R J Marshall LLB DipTP MRTPI

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

Decision date: 16 December 2016

Appeal Ref: APP/P1425/W/16/3150207

13, Seaford Homes Ltd., Belgrave Road, Seaford, East Sussex, BN25 2EG

- 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 Sunjay Rai against the decision of Lewes District Council.
 - The application Ref LW/15/0890, dated 9 November 2015, was refused by notice dated 16 February 2016.
 - The development proposed is Demolition of existing garage and change of use of Stanbury Cottage to C2 (Care Home) in conjunction with Nova House and 2A Westdown Road and single story extension to Nova House linking the three buildings to provide seven extra bedrooms and day room.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

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

Reasons

3. The appeal site is in an attractive, largely residential, suburban area. It has been defined by the Council as an Area of Established Character (AEC). These are areas where in accordance with saved Policy H12 of the Lewes District Local Plan (2003) special attention will be paid to the need to retain the existing character of the area. The areas designated as AECs are those of sufficient merit to justify particular care when considering development proposals.
4. The appeal site is on a roughly rectangular piece of land between Belgrave Road to the south and Westdown Road to the north. Both of these roads are fronted primarily by detached houses on relatively large plots. The houses range widely between a few 1960s style houses, 1920's/30s style houses and some Victorian/Edwardian properties. And although some of the houses are quite close together the fairly substantial width of the two roads, with grass verges and pavements to either side, results in a spacious appearance to the area. The overall impression created is of a most attractive residential environment. Belgrave Road and Westdown Road roads are linked by Wilmington Road, a narrow private road that runs alongside the north-eastern boundary of the appeal site. Nova House, the main building on the appeal site, and 2/3 storeys in height, has a lengthy frontage to this road and lies in quite

close proximity to it. However, the more substantial set back of 2 detached houses on the opposite site of the road and the sizeable gap between them ensures that Wilmington Road nonetheless retains a reasonably spacious appearance. And this is so notwithstanding the taller block of flats on the Wilmington Road/Belgrave Road frontage given the extent that it is set back from both roads.

5. There are 3 buildings on the appeal site. Nova House, a C2 Care Home, is on the largest south-eastern portion of the site. As well as facing Wilmington Road it also faces onto Belgrave Road. On the remaining smaller north-west portion of the site are 2 much smaller single-storey buildings. They are Stanbury Cottage, in C3 use, and No. 2A Westdown Road which is in C2 use in connection with Nova House.
6. The proposed development is for the change of use of Stanbury Cottage to C2 use to bring it into the Care Home complex and the construction of 2 single storey extensions. The largest extension would provide additional bedrooms and link Nova House with Stanbury Cottage. The other extension, providing a day room, would link Stanbury Cottage with No. 2A Westdown Road.
7. The Council has no objection solely to the change of use of Stanbury Cottage. Correctly so in my view as the change of use of the premises alone would have no substantial impact on the character and appearance of the surrounding area. However, turning to other aspects of the proposed development, by linking Nova House and Stanbury Cottage the bedroom extension would result in a very lengthy property overall. This would be wholly out of keeping with most other buildings in the locality. This, together with the rather piecemeal effect of adding to an already extended building, would detract from the character and appearance of the area notwithstanding the use of matching materials. And by filling in an existing gap it would detract from the spacious appearance of this part of Wilmington Road. This harm would not be outweighed by any benefit that might arise in removing from view a cluster of small sheds within the gap, not least because they are reasonably well screened by an existing fence.
8. By linking Stanbury Cottage with No. 2A the proposed day room would create a building with a greater width across its frontage than is characteristic along Westdown Road. However, this would not be to an extent that, taken alone, it would result in an unacceptable form of development. However, the extension would link 2 buildings of notably different design, one with a fully hipped roof, and the other with a gable end. And both buildings are set back different distances from the road. To some extent the proposed extension would work quite well in joining these 2 properties together and in using matching materials. Its roof design would blend in quite well with the fully hipped roof of Stanbury Cottage. However, there would be an awkward juxtaposition between the partially sloping roof of the proposed extension and the gable end of No. 2A, not least because of the forward projection of the extension from this property. This would result an unattractive element to part of the extended building that would be detrimental to the street scene. This harm would outweigh the advantage of removing an existing garage between the 2 buildings and generally tidying them up. And any landscaping would be unlikely to provide an effective screen to this part of the extension given the need to prevent obscuring windows.

9. It is concluded that the proposed development would detract from the character and appearance of the surrounding area. It would be contrary to LP Policies H12 and ST3 on the protection of AECs and need for new development generally to respect the local area and to Core Policy 11 of the Joint Core Strategy which has similar objectives.
10. I appreciate that the Care Home meets an important need locally. And I note the appellant's observations on the need to enhance facilities and services at a time when such premises are going through difficult times economically. However, whilst I sympathise with the appellant in this regard these considerations do not outweigh the harm I have found.

Conclusion

11. For the reasons given above is concluded that the appeal should be dismissed.

R J Marshall

INSPECTOR