
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 27 November 2017

by C Jack BSc(Hons) MA MA(TP) MRTPI

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

Decision date: 1st December 2017.

Appeal Ref: APP/X1735/W/17/3182577

Land Adjacent to 2 New Road, Havant PO9 1DE

- 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 Gary Robinson against the decision of Havant Borough Council.
 - The application Ref APP/17/00347, received on 30 March 2017, was refused by notice dated 30 June 2017.
 - The development proposed is a two storey undercroft office extension.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. There is a discrepancy with the application form regarding the date that the application subject to this appeal was made, because the date was apparently not changed from that given on the form for a previous scheme for the site. The Council's decision notice confirms that it received the appeal application on 30 March 2017, and I have taken this as the date of the application.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

4. The appeal site consists of an existing two-storey modern office building known as Aura House. The building is situated in the built up area of Havant on a roughly triangular site, between the railway line and New Road. A number of parking spaces are provided within the site. Bedhampton railway station is a very short walk away. It is proposed to extend the office provision at first floor level to allow the retention of car parking spaces by creating an undercroft below. Access to the new accommodation would be via a spiral staircase in the undercroft. Nearby development on New Road is mainly residential in nature, although some commercial buildings can be seen, particularly on the other side of the railway.
5. The existing building is set at the rear of the site, and is staggered in response to the position and direction of the rear boundary. The proposed extension would respond similarly by projecting forward of the existing building, almost to the front boundary with New Road. The site is open to clear public view and the prominent forward projection of the extension would be highly apparent.

Moreover, the undercroft design, and particularly the awkward juxtaposition with the existing building, due to the small infill gable at first floor level to provide a stairwell, would be visually discordant with the host building. I note that the design has been influenced by existing vernacular, that the extension would be positioned away from residential properties, and that similar materials and matching windows and rainwater goods are proposed. Nevertheless, I consider that the proposal would detract from the appearance of the building overall and would be detrimental to the character and appearance of the area, particularly due to its prominent siting.

6. I therefore conclude that the proposed development would harm the character and appearance of the area. It would therefore conflict with Policy CS16 of the adopted Havant Borough Core Strategy 2011 (the CS), which requires development to be designed to a high standard. This policy pre-dates the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework). However, I consider it to be generally consistent with the Framework's aims in relation to good design and therefore I have afforded it substantial weight in this appeal.
7. The Council's reason for refusal also refers to the Havant Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) 2011. The Council has drawn my attention particularly to several paragraphs in the SPD that primarily relate to residential development. While this guidance may have some cross-relevance to an office development, the SPD has not been determinative in my findings in this case.

Other Matters

8. I accept that the proposal would provide adaptable accommodation to facilitate up to three new jobs and help to maintain the viability of the site. I consider that these are benefits of the proposal, but they would be limited in scope by the overall scale of the scheme and accordingly I have afforded them modest weight in favour of the appeal, and I note that Policy CS2 of the CS supports job creation generally but favours town centre locations for offices. The proposal would be situated in a generally accessible urban location but would not be in the town centre. I also note the support for the proposal from existing occupiers. However, on balance, I consider that the benefits of the scheme are not sufficient to outweigh the significant harm that the development would bring in relation to the main issue above.

Conclusion

9. For the reasons given above, and having regard to all matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Catherine Jack

INSPECTOR