Southern Planning Practice
Town Planning Consultants

Appeal of Householder application Ref: F/16/79437

Site: 13 Beechcroft Close Chandlers Ford

Written Representation Statement on behalf of the appellant

The appellant is Mr Tim Bembridge, who owns the property. This written statement should be read in conjunction with:

- the plans and drawings submitted in support of the above application
- an appreciation of the built form of the residential area and context in which the appeal property is located

1. Introduction

The appeal property is located towards the end of a small residential cul-de-sac in the built up area of Chandlers Ford. The residential neighbourhood in which it is located is characterised by a number of small cul-de-sac accessed from Hillcrest Avenue and which form part of the street-scene in and between that connecting road. The appeal property is located in Beechcroft Close which lies on the south-west side of Hillcrest Avenue.



Photograph 1 The cul-de-sac at Beechcroft Close

An application to extend the appeal property at roof level, to provide a bedroom suite comprising a bedroom, en-suite shower room a bathroom and dressing room, was recently refused by the local planning authority. There was only one refusal reason which related to:

- an overly dominant form of development in the street scene that contrasts with the established character of the area.
- The proposed development due to its, design, massing and scale, would create an unattractive and incongruous feature at odds with the appearance of the neighbouring properties and detrimental to the character and pattern of development within the locality.
- The proposed development is contrary to Saved Policy 59.BE of the Eastleigh Borough Local Plan Review [2001-2011]

The Officer Report confirms that the principle of development is acceptable and that there were no issues relating to the host dwelling or for neighbouring amenity. The Officer Report also confirms that there would be no conflict with highway safety and parking requirements, nor would there be concern regarding trees or landscape features in the area.

Therefore, the only matter at issue is whether the impact of the proposed alterations is acceptable to the appearance of the street-scene and the character of the surrounding neighbourhood.

2. Site Context

Beechcroft Close is one of several relatively small residential culs-de-sac lying either side of Hillcrest Avenue and forming part of the streetscene in the area. The residential area is located on ground that slopes away north-westward and views are available from Beechcroft Close to the housing in Hillcrest Avenue and through to the cul-de-sac at Beechcroft Way on the opposite side of that road.

The neighbourhood is characterised by a variety of housing including single storey bungalows, many of which have been extended at upper floor level to become dormer bungalows. There is also two storey housing to the south-east in Hillcrest Avenue *(see photograph 6)* and two storey houses also form the backdrop in Fir Croft Drive *(see photograph 9)* to the south-west. The cul-de-sac at Beechcroft Close is characterised by bungalows, many of which have been extended in a variety of ways (including at roof level) and there are views to dormer bungalows and two storey housing nearby in Hillcrest Way and in the cul-de-sac at Beechcroft Way opposite. Gables are also a typical feature of housing in the residential neighbourhood. *(See photographs)*



Photograph 2 Dormer extensions in Beechcroft Close viewed from Hillcrest Avenue



Photographs 3 & 4 Gables and box dormers nearby in Hillcrest Avenue





Photograph 5 Rear dormer extensions in Hillcrest Avenue as viewed from Beechcroft Close



Photograph 6 Gable at 23 Hillcrest Avenue on the corner with Beechcroft Close



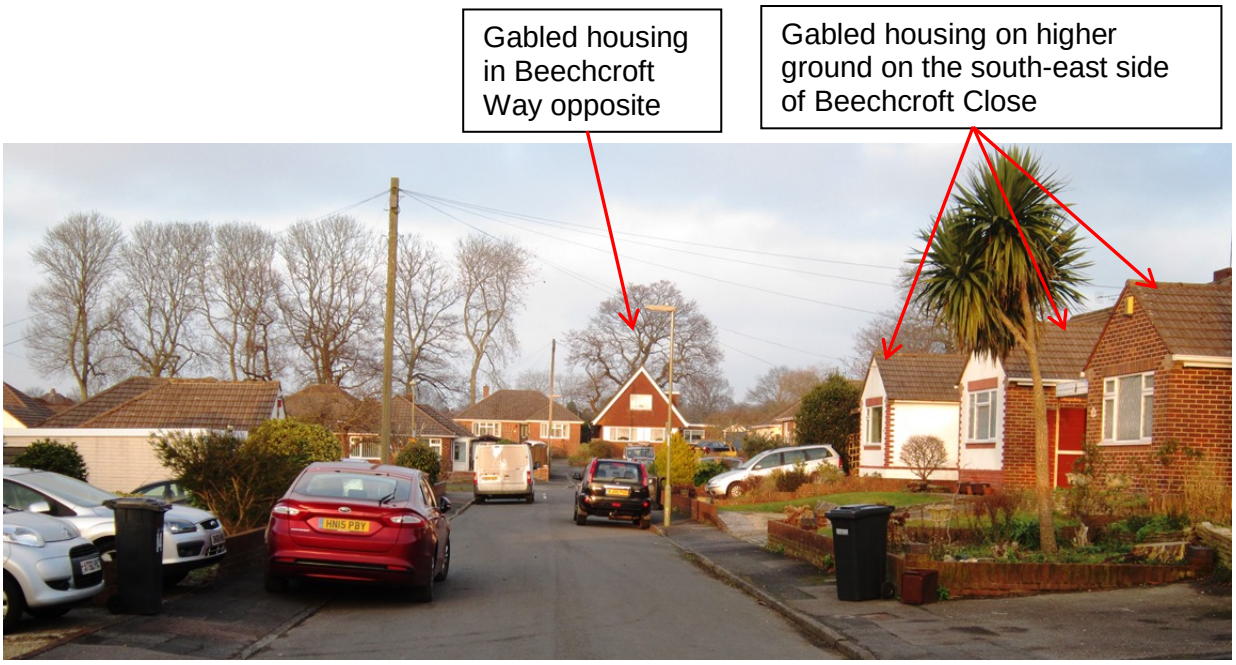
Photograph 4 Number 29 Hillcrest Avenue to the north-west of Beechcroft Close





Photograph 9 Housing in Fir Croft Drive to the south-west

The housing in Beechcroft Close is made up of 1950s/60s semi-detached and detached bungalows arranged along the close and around the 'hammerhead' at the end. (*See photograph 1)* It is a cul-de-sac of 16 dwellings - not a large development in itself. The extent of the close can be viewed from Hillcrest Avenue and from Beechcroft Way opposite. The bungalows as originally built are set back from the road and within surrounding outside amenity space. Several of the bungalows have a front projection such as the other half of the pair, at number 14 and, on the opposite side of the road, at numbers 6, 8, 9 and 10 *(see photographs 9 & 10)* and also the property at number 23 Hillcrest Avenue which occupies the corner of Beechcroft Close *(see photograph 6)*. Several of the properties have been extended at upper floor level. *(See photograph 2 as an example)*



Photographs10 The housing in Beechcroft Way on the opposite side of Hillcrest Avenue, as viewed from Beechcroft Close - Note how the chalet bungalow fits seamlessly into its surroundings



Photograph 11 The streetscene including the appeal property at Beechcroft Close and the housing in Beechcroft Way on the opposite side of Hillcrest Avenue

The appeal property is a semi-detached single storey bungalow attached to and semi-detached with number 14 to the north-east. The pair are set back from and at lower ground level than the road. (*See photograph 12).* The appeal property occupies a large rectangular plot with most of the outside amenity space laid out to the rear. The rear garden is enclosed by 1.8 metre high timber fencing. A low brick wall forms the garden boundary fronting the road and along the driveway to the side. The property is served by a driveway from the road which passes along the side of the bungalow to the detached garage. The garage and another detached ancillary outbuilding behind it are located inside the south-west boundary of the garden to the rear of the bungalow.



Photograph 12 The appeal site at 13 Beechcroft Way

The bungalow is of brick construction with white painted render. The roof is hipped and clad with tiles.

Appeal proposal

The proposal is for alterations to the roof that involve creating a new ridge line 0.9m above the existing ridge of the pair or properties so that there is a gable end facing front and back and a secondary gable on the side elevation to provide the necessary height above the stairs to the new first floor. The principal windows face front and rear with a window to the stairwell and two small rooflights in the side elevation.

Amount and layout

The proposed development would provide a bedroom with en-suite facilities together with a dressing room and second bathroom (replacing that at ground floor level which will form part of the conversion work to provide the lobby and access to the staircase). The accommodation would be accessed by a staircase from the lobby to be created at ground floor level. The extension runs the full depth of the property and, with the exception of a small part of the roof, the full width.

Natural lighting for the proposed upper floor accommodation would be provided by openings in the gable ends to the front and rear and by rooflights over the bathrooms. The window in the side gable elevation would serve the stairwell.

Scale and massing

The proposed alterations would involve adding a new first floor under a pitched roof that would be 0.9m higher than existing. Part of the existing ridge line would be unaltered and run through with that of number 14.

The increased height and form of the extension would be seen in the context of the built form of number 14, and to which the appeal property is attached, which has a 3.1m deep pitched roof extension projecting out from the front of the dwelling.

Appearance

The new roof would be clad in tiles to match the existing roof and adjoining property at number 14.

The windows in the gable ends and side gable would match the existing casement windows at ground floor level in design, materials and finishes. The two rooflights would be small in dimension and discreet.

The proposed alterations would not only improve the level of accommodation within the property but would also introduce further visual interest and character to the cul-de-sac which has no uniformity of building style and design. The proposed scheme would be similar in scale and design to the dormer bungalow visible in the street-scene and located in the opposite cul-de-sac at number 4 Beechcroft Way. (*See photographs 13*) But, in the case of the appeal property, the extended roof would be at a lower level in the streetscene because it is already set at lower ground level than the road. The proposed alterations at the appeal property would be a more compact and an integral design solution for extending the property than forms of other roof extensions in the neighbourhood. *(See photographs 2 to 6 inclusive)*



Photograph 13 The gabled dormer bungalow at 4 Beechcroft Way in the opposite cul-de-sac

It is submitted that the character of the area in general and of Beechcroft Close in particular has no inherent design style that has survived intact since this area of housing was built. In 2017 whilst there are a number of dwellings of different shapes, sizes and forms that have been little altered or extended there are very many that have been. There is thus no uniformity of style and character that it is important, in planning terms to protect or maintain.

The established character of the area is one of variety of styles, heights and forms that one would expect to experience in a mature residential area such as this. It is submitted that, in this context, the appeal proposal is not at odds with a neighbourhood of such an heterogeneous character as alleged in the reason for refusal.

Landscaping

There were no proposals for landscaping and the Officer Report confirms that the scheme would not affect the existing vegetation at the property or the surrounding area.

Access

The Officer Report confirms there would be adequate space at the front of the property to accommodate 2 vehicles which would meet the requirements for a 3 bedroom property as set out in the LPA's Supplementary Planning Document for parking.

3. Planning Policy

Government policy - National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

Aside from the Development Plan, (which is discussed further below) government advice is contained in the National Planning Policy Framework. The Framework is material to the consideration of the application and, in particular, requires planning to

- Seek positive improvements in the quality of the built, natural and historic and well as in people's quality of life including the conditions in which people live (Paragraph 9)
- Make decisions that are responsive to local circumstances and take in to account that different areas may offer different opportunities for sustainable development (Paragraph 10)
- Approve development proposals that accord with the development plan without delay and where relevant development plan policies are out of date, grant permission, unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the Framework policies taken as a whole (Paragraph 14) Not simply be about scrutiny, but instead be a creative exercise in finding ways to enhance and improve the places in which people live their lives (Paragraph 17)
- Always seek to secure high quality design and a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings (Paragraph 17)

Section 7 of the Framework deals with design and, of particular relevant to the appeal, requires planning to:

- Contribute positively to making places better for people (Paragraph 56)
- Ensure developments function well and add to the overall quality of the area (Paragraph 58)
- Respond to local character and reflect the identity of local surroundings and materials while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation (Paragraph 58)

- Ensure developments are visually attractive but recognise that design goes beyond aesthetics considerations and should address the connection between people and places and the integration of development into the surrounding environment (Paragraph 58)
- Refuse development that fails to take the opportunity for improving the character and quality of the area and the way it functions (Paragraph 64)

The Framework also requires planning authorities to look for solutions rather than problems and to seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible. (Paragraph 187). The proposal accords with the aim of the Framework in that it is a sustainable development within an established residential area and has been designed to meet the requirements of the appellant and his family; it will improve the quality of their living conditions without any detriment to the living conditions of others.

The design approach is no different to that taken by others in extending their properties and would result in a development that accords with the heterogeneous character of the area.

The Development Plan

Following withdrawal of the 2014 pre-submission plan, the local planning authority does not have an up to date development plan. The development plan is the saved policies of the Local Plan Review adopted 2009

The relevant saved Local Plan Policy to the appeal is 59.BE for Promoting Good Design that is referred to in the reason for refusal. The relevance and applicability of policy 59.BE is analysed below. The planning authority has also adopted Supplementary Planning Guidance in the form of "Quality Places" adopted November 2011 (which pre-dates national planning policy provided by the Framework)

Emerging Local Plan

Following withdrawal of the 2014 pre-submission plan, the planning authority is working on a new Local Plan and as there are no development plan documents it simply is not relevant to the appeal.

4. Grounds of appeal

The Framework confirms that, under planning law, applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the development plan (preferably an up-to-date plan) unless material considerations indicate otherwise. In this case it is submitted that the proposed scheme is in accordance with the saved policy of the Development Plan relating to the quality of the built environment, and the associated SPG. The appeal proposal to extend the dwelling is acceptable in the context of the Government planning policy aims and objectives for:

- Securing a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupiers
- Improving the conditions in which people live and
- Widening the choice of high quality homes

Principle

The Officer Report confirms the principle of extending the appeal dwelling is acceptable subject to the nature, design and impact of the development in accordance with the relevant Local Plan policies and SPG.

The principle accords with national and development plan policy which supports development that is appropriate in design and scale to the character of the site and surrounding area. The principle of extending the appeal dwelling at roof level is established by the number of dwellings so extended in the surrounding residential area. *(See photographs above*)

Impact on the character of the site and area

The appeal submission demonstrates the culs-de-sac accessed off Hillcrest Avenue have a variety of building forms but have no particular architectural qualities as the Inspector will see when he or she visits the site. Whilst the cul-de-sac at Beechcroft Close was originally built as bungalows, many have been extended such that the heterogeneous nature of the built form is the main impression gained from visiting the locality. There is no longer one built form that provides a common characteristic.
Further afield than the Close the built form is also very varied with two storey houses becoming predominant, some chalet bungalows and the same heterogeneous mix of original bungalows and extended bungalows. This is illustrated by the photographs included in this statement.

There is nothing wrong or odd (as the planning authority puts it) about dwellings of different shapes and sizes and profiles being next to each other as long as the standard of amenity of the respective properties are safeguarded. The example of 4 Beechcroft Way illustrates the way in which different types of property add to the character of the area and raise that character from what some might call bland to visually interesting. That is what the appeal proposal would do.

The proposed first floor extension at the appeal property would increase its height by 0.9m at the ridge. That has the great benefit of avoiding the use of flat roofs that otherwise characterise some of the large dormer extensions added to other properties. The increased height has very little visual impact on and does not dominate the street because the appeal property is set at a lower ground level than the road. Furthermore the projecting front extension at number 14 would reduce the potential visibility in the close to in and around the hammerhead where a variety of buildings styles exist. It is not accepted that the extension would be conspicuous in the streetscene, nor overly dominant in the surroundings.

Far from conflicting with saved policy 59.BE, the proposed first floor extension would accord with the policy and the need to respect design matters because it:

- Takes full and proper account of the context of the site including the character and appearance of the neighbourhood
- Is appropriate in mass, scale, materials, layout, density, design and siting both at the property and in relation to adjoining buildings, spaces and views
- Does not involve the loss of any natural features or trees
- Makes the most efficient use of the land by extending an existing dwelling
- Has no implications for existing access
- Meets the parking levels required by the planning authority's SPD

Impact on neighbouring amenity

The dwelling is set back from and at lower level than neighbouring properties to the north east and on the opposite side of the cul-de-sac. The proposed extension would increase the roof height by 0.9m only. The Officer assessment of the proposal records that it would be sufficient distance from neighbouring dwellings to have no material impact on natural lighting and '*to protect the outlook from those dwellings'.*

The proposed windows and rooflights at upper floor level would be suitably located and/or obscure glazed to avoid any unacceptable level of overlooking and loss of privacy. It is agreed with the Officer assessment that any overlooking that might occur would not 'be materially harmful to the occupants of the neighbouring properties.'

Conclusion

The appeal submission demonstrates the proposed first floor extension would blend in with the surrounding buildings and be less visible in the streetscene than other extended properties in the vicinity. Also that it would be in keeping with the heterogeneous character and visual amenity of the area; an area characterised by a range of two storey houses, chalet bungalows and bungalows many of which have been extended at upper floor level. There is no common built form that it is important, in planning terms, to adhere to.

The proposed extension would have no material impact on neighbouring amenity, highway safety or natural features.

As well as there being no conflict with saved policy 59.BE the proposed extension would also meet the Framework requirements because it would:

- Make a positive contribution to the living accommodation at the appeal property without harm to the character and amenity of the area (Paragraph 56)
- Function well and add to the overall quality of the area (Paragraph 58)
- Respond to local character and reflect the identity of local surroundings and materials while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation (Paragraph 58)
- Be visually attractive and integrate into the surrounding environment (Paragraph 58)

It has therefore been demonstrated that the appeal proposal accords with national and Development Plan policy and the reason for refusal is unfounded. For these reasons the Inspector is respectfully requested to uphold the appeal and grant planning permission.

Southern Planning Practice
January 2017