

WINCHESTER & EASTLEIGH DESIGN REVIEW PANEL

Date of meeting: 16/01/2024

Site: Cherry Court, Salterns Lane, Bursledon, Southampton, S031 8DH

Proposal: Construction of five bedroom detached dwelling over three levels, together with topographical changes to the rear garden, following demolition of existing dwelling

Planning reference: F/23/96152

Design Review Panel Members sitting on the Panel: Jonathan Moore (Chair), Laura Locke, Andrew Hoare & Rob Jackson

Council Officers in attendance: Gary Osmond

Item presented by: Jon Dale (Architect) & Louise Cutts (Planning Agent)

Declarations of Interest declared: None

Comments:

Context & Analysis:

The position of the site and views available from it make it very special, and the desire to maximise these views is acknowledged. It is also acknowledged that the site lies within a part of the Old Bursledon Conservation Area where the scale and architectural style of dwellings is relatively mixed.

Notwithstanding, the starting point of any proposal should be a thorough analysis of the site and its context, which should then be used to drive the final design. However, the Panel could see little evidence of a comprehensive site analysis, or the evolution of the design presented. As such, it was difficult to understand the rationale behind the proposal.

It was also noted that the site may not be as well screened as was being suggested. Whilst many plots in the area are hidden from public view, the application site does not benefit from the same degree of mature tree planting. This together with its relatively close proximity to the lane and public right of way/track down to the river and boatyard means that the site is reasonably visible from the public realm both at the front and rear. Its open aspect to the eastern end of the site and its elevated position also means that the site will be visible from the river.

Precedents:

Various very famous architectural precedents were put forward as inspiration for the design. However, it was not clear how any of these related to the application site and the characteristics of this part of the conservation area. Why propose something inspired by early twentieth century European modernist urban architecture in the Hampshire countryside, when there are many more recent UK examples which would be better suited to the site?

Form & Scale:

Concerns were expressed that whilst volumetrically the new dwelling may not be substantially greater than the existing, the increased width does make that proposed visually much larger. This is then compounded by stretching accommodation over three floors. Pushing the building's footprint out to the edges of the site also raises concerns in relation to impact upon boundary trees, as well as the visual impact upon the adjacent public realm.

Much was made of two other examples of flat roof dwelling in the locality. These were noted, although the site context and single storey nature of these examples are quite different to that of the application site and the design proposed. In principle there is no objection to a flat roofed building, so long as the reasoning for this can be justified in design terms. However, concern was expressed that the resulting flat roof form proposed was more related to maximising volume. This is further enforced by the simplistic vertical stacking of floors, which given the sloping nature of the site, this does appear to be something of a missed opportunity to provide a more interesting design which responds to the site's topography.

Design:

Placing the main habitable accommodation along the south-eastern side of the building to take advantage of the view and solar gain, and more ancillary spaces to the north-western side is a logical approach. However, this has resulted in a somewhat harsh front elevation, which has a very limited connection to Salterns Lane.

In stark contrast, the south-eastern elevation has a lot going on and is visually very confusing. Whilst the need to break up the mass and bulk of what is a very large elevation is noted, the rationale behind the various forms and planes was not clear, not helped by the lack of any 3D images/diagrams. Is the pushing and pulling of the elevation's depth a response to what is happening internally, or is it purely aesthetics? The elevation needs to be simplified substantially. However, this may only serve to more clearly demonstrate the very large scale of the building.

Sustainability:

Little thought appears to have been given to matters of sustainability. Whilst it is accepted that the existing dwelling may not be well insulated or up to the expected standards of today, the need to completely demolish it rather than adapt and reuse was questioned. This is especially so given that the

proposed dwelling would be built on top of the existing dwelling's footprint. Rescue of the existing dwelling would ultimately have a far lesser environmental impact than demolition and rebuild.

Consideration for other sustainable measure needs to be given at the early design stage. For instance, the proposed flat roof would be more than suitable for solar panels. However, the current form of construction proposed would result in panels sitting proud of the roof, which could have a negative impact upon the visual amenity of the conservation area, as well as alter the appearance of the dwelling.

Conclusion:

This is an exceptional site which requires a sympathetic and well considered design which has been based on a thorough understanding of the site, its surrounding context, and an understanding of the landscape character of the area. Whilst this work may have been undertaken, it is not evident in the design proposed, which relates poorly to the site and its surroundings. Ironically, the earlier sketch drawings briefly shown appeared to demonstrate a better understanding of site and could have provided a far more appropriate design response.

The scale of that proposed, in particular its width, together with the boxy form and architectural style/s used would result in a very large and unsympathetic development within a visible part of the conservation area, to its detriment. The complex elevational treatments and use of materials do little to break up the visual and physical bulk of building, which has been forced into the site. Equally, the topographical changes proposed to the site appear excessive and unnecessary, as does the decision to demolish the existing dwelling only to replace it with something of a very similar footprint in the same position. Adaption and reuse of the existing dwelling would work equally well, together with being far more environmentally conscious.

The Panel would suggest that the future of the site needs to be looked at afresh, so that a much more considered and sympathetic design response can be formulated, which includes consideration of the landscape setting for the scheme. That proposed fails to meet these requirements and would result in adverse harm to the conservation area.