APP/Y3805/W/20/3266076

Land opposite 17-19 Victoria Road, Shoreham, West Sussex, BN43 5LA

APPEAL OBJECTION

04/05/2021

This objection is made by the following residents who live in the immediate vicinity of the appeal site, and who would be directly and adversely affected by the proposal to build a new house.

Bill and Max Sweatman, 19a Victoria Road

Lucy Wales, 17, Victoria Road

Claire Soper, 17a, Victoria Road

Tim and Jenny Holter, 15 Victoria Road

Alan and Diane Berwick, 13 Victoria Road

These comments supplement those objections already made at the application stage.

Application documents:

The perspective drawings give a misleading impression of the width of the private lane adjacent to the proposed house and do not show the walls on the north side of the lane. The location is a narrow, unmade lane, not the paved urban courtyard depicted on the drawings.

The proposed east elevation, and the section drawings B-B and C-C do not show the ground floor bay window of No. 19, which protrudes some 800mm from the façade shown, narrowing the gap between the two buildings.

Layout and design:

The proposed house would be sited immediately in front of No. 19 Victoria Road, approximately 9 metres from its main, south facing, living room window. No. 19 currently enjoys a light and open southerly outlook and the proposed building would radically alter this, replacing openness with the dark north elevation of a large building at close quarters creating a strong sense of enclosure. This would be exacerbated by the proposed flat-roof

design with high eaves. Were No. 19 not owned by the Applicant, no doubt there would be vociferous objection from its occupants. The house would also impinge on the light and outlook of No. 17a. The Officer's report refers to examples, including West Street, just east of Victoria Road, where established rows of houses face each other at close quarters. These close-knit streets run north/south, allowing light to both sides of the road, which is not the arrangement proposed here. In any case, the separation proposed here is much less than that found at West Street where it is some 12 metres, as opposed to 9 metres here. (Note the Officer's Report states the separation is 9.7 metres, but, if taken from the application drawings, this excludes the bay window to No.19, so the actual gap is actually just under 9 metres.

The proposed house's garden would be directly overlooked by the upper floor windows of Nos 17a and 17. The proposed garden wall would not mitigate this due to the close proximity of the windows and garden.

The proposed layout, setting the house at 90 degrees to the existing houses in the road, would be discordant and out of character. The narrow private road has three pairs of semi-detached houses facing south towards the former railway embankment. The introduction of a detached house, set at right angles to the existing dwellings but with a flank elevation less than 10 metres from them, would be wholly out of character. The starkly contemporary design and materials would add to the visual prominence of the building which would appear entirely out of place and cramped in its context.

We understand that Policy 15 of the Adur Local Plan requires development to enhance the local environment. The issues we have identified would materially harm existing character and cannot be said to enhance it. The fourth criterion of Policy 15 specifically requires development to make a positive contribution to the sense of place, local character and distinctiveness of an area and to not have an unacceptable impact on adjacent properties, particularly dwellings, including unacceptable loss of privacy, daylight/sunlight, outlook or open amenity space. Here the severe impact upon the outlook of No. 19 clearly breaches the latter part of this criterion and the discordant layout and orientation cannot reasonably be said to make a positive contribution to local character.

Access, parking and turning:

The response to the application from Highways noted that the private drive serves '4+' dwellings. In fact, it provides vehicular access for seven dwellings at present, eight as proposed, with parking in the front gardens of Nos 13 to 19a, and to the rear of No 21. Parking is only possible in these spaces because the land on the south side of the private road is open and manoeuvring vehicles can over-sail it. Enclosure of a significant section of the lane would lead to parking difficulties for Nos 19, 17a and 17. In addition, in the absence of turning space in the lane, vehicles would be obliged to back out into Victoria Road.

The Highways Authority did not object to the application, but as residents who use the lane daily, we are acutely aware that access from the private lane onto Victoria Road is dangerous. Exiting the lane is literally an act of faith as there is no visibility available to the south until after a car has crossed the pavement and is protruding into the highway. That presents a significant danger, particularly given the use of the road by children accessing Swiss Gardens Primary School nearby. The feedback from Highways comments that there is no evidence that the access is currently operating unsafely, but that evidence does not include near-misses and emergency braking to avoid collisions. The Inspector is urged to please drive (with great caution) into our lane, turn on site and drive out, so as to fully appreciate the difficulties. Anybody undertaking the manoeuvre would immediately see that the access is dangerous and adding an additional dwelling and associated car movements would only make it worse. We understand that the response from Highways was made without the benefit of a site visit and given their underestimate of the number of dwellings served by the lane, we feel strongly that the highway safety issues here have not been properly considered. They are severe, and the Inspector is urged to give them careful consideration, despite the absence of Highways' objection.

Conditions:

We understand that details of how the construction could proceed, if permitted, could be dealt with by a condition requiring a Construction Management Plan to be agreed with the council. This would only be appropriate, though, if there was a reasonable prospect of a satisfactory plan being devised. Vehicles any bigger than a large van would struggle to access the private drive from Victoria Road. Loading and unloading equipment and materials in Victoria Road risks conflicts with pedestrians, in particular school children, accessing Swiss Gardens Primary School just 100 metres to the north. Such construction vehicles as could gain access would not be able to turn on-site, necessitating backing out into the road. In addition, it is unclear how the proposed dwelling could be constructed without significant disruption and inconvenience to adjacent dwellings, in particular blocking access. Construction within the bounds of the site would present a further challenge, given the close proximity of the building to the site boundaries. In short, we do not consider that construction of a new dwelling here would be either practical or safe.

Conclusions:

It is the opinion of local residents in the lane that this location is too constrained and too poorly accessed to be able to satisfactorily accommodate the proposed dwelling. We agree with the council that the design is inappropriate, but also think that the impacts on our amenities and on highway safety should rule this proposal out and therefore urge the Inspector to dismiss the appeal.