

DC/19/2746/FUL – Construction of a single storey rear extension and alterations to dwelling, 59 Pier Avenue, IP18 6BL.

Recommendation: Refusal.

History of Application

The first application was withdrawn. The Town Council then contacted the agent to suggest a site meeting to discuss how the design could be improved but this invitation was not taken up. The NPPF encourages the LPA to encourage applicants to engage with the local community to deliver better outcomes for everyone. In this second application, the developer has not addressed the Town Council's concerns.

This response should be read in conjunction with our previous response (attached). Comments on key issues, and supporting policies/guidance, respond to the new application.

Description of building/character area

59 Pier Avenue is a respectable Arts and Crafts style 3-bedroom dwelling built in the 1930's of red brick with a clay pantile roof. Its exterior is intact except for the substitution of plastic Crittall-style windows for the original Crittall windows.

Three of the defining qualities of the Arts and Crafts style can be seen in this building – clarity and simplicity of form, asymmetry, and distinctive roof lines characterised by cat slide roofs and slightly upturned eaves. No 59 is one of a group of four Arts and Crafts dwellings on the south side of Pier Avenue, possibly constructed by the same builder, which begins with the landmark dwelling, the Thatched Cottage, located on the corner of Pier Avenue and Marlborough Road. (Figure 2.) This grouping, coupled with three Tudor-style dwellings on the opposite side of the street, built in approximately 1905, gives the east end of Pier Avenue an Arts and Crafts flavour.

Pier Avenue is located in the Town Farm Character Area, so-called because it was developed by the Coast Development Company who bought most of the Southwold Borough Corporation's Town Farm in 1898. Influenced by the Garden City urban design movement, Coast laid out streets in a grid pattern with a hierarchy of plot sizes to accommodate dwellings for people of different means. Pier Avenue, running from the train station to the pier, was the area's premier location, with generous sized plots and large rear gardens backing onto the gardens of Hotson Road. It remains a gateway for visitors to the town who turn left on the roundabout on Station Road and drive the length of Pier Avenue to the public parking by the Pier.

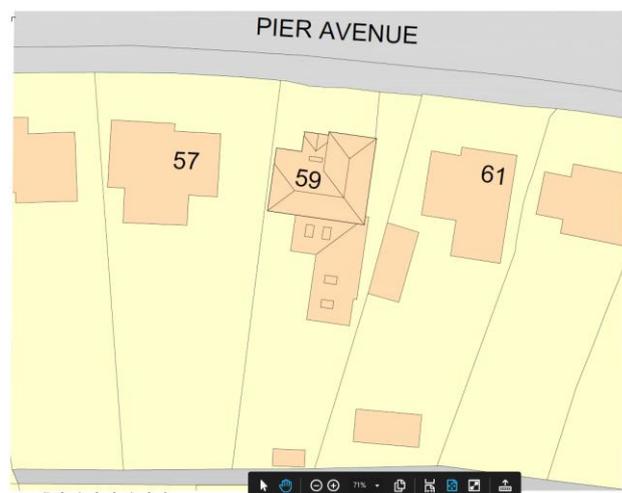
Because Hotson Road sits higher than Pier Avenue, houses on the east end of Hotson Road over-look the rear elevations and gardens of Pier Avenue. The open vistas created by this network of gardens, clearly visible from Marlborough Road, contributes to the verdant, open, low density character of the area.

Comments on key issues with the proposed plan

1. The unacceptable size, bulk and mass are created by the oversized accommodation proposed for a site whose garden is somewhat smaller than the immediate area: a ground floor consisting of a large ensuite bedroom, study, large kitchen/diner, a separate utility and larder room that is about 60% of the size of the kitchen/dinner, a studio and two storage rooms.

2. The block/site plan clearly shows that the scheme does not respond to the local context and form of surrounding buildings in relation to overall layout, site coverage, height and massing of existing buildings, and the relationship between building and spaces and the wider street scene or townscape. The block plan demonstrates the difference in urban grain of this application.

The reduction in the height is not sufficient to make the extension less over-bearing. A substantial reduction in footprint to align the scheme with existing properties would be required. Conceivably, bearing in mind the size of the garden and shed, this could be not much more than the permitted development of four metres from the original building allowed within the AONB. (Southwold is in the AONB.)



3. The retained proposed front porch irretrievably alters the character/ form of the building. There is no functional need to enlarge the porch as the scheme provides for a side entrance to the utility room in the rear.
4. The change in style of windows. Permitted development rules do not suspend the principles of good design. The Householder's Technical Guidance – see below – states “... any works to enlarge, alter or improve a house [should] result in an appearance that minimises visual impact and is sympathetic to existing development.” If powder coated metal multi pane windows in the Crittal style of the original house (which are mimicked by the existing upvc windows) were used on the front and side elevations, this would improve the quality of the design.
5. The use of wood/synthetic cladding. This material is out of character with the Arts and Craft style on Pier Avenue. No 61, the next door 1930's Arts and Crafts style house was harmed through synthetic wood cladding BEFORE the adoption of the current local plan, whose robust design policies have developed in response to Council “feedback indicating there is a perception that design of development in the District is not as strong as it should be. Effective design policies alongside understanding and enhancing the distinctive qualities of the District are key to addressing this issue.” (P. 8.176).
Permitted development rights within the AONB prohibit use of cladding.
6. The front garden is a good feature of the house, and contributes to the character of the area. The scheme calls for most of it to be devoted to parking, creating a car dominated frontage. Even if there were a reduction in the number of bedrooms to four, there needs to be parking provision for three cars. The damage can be limited by hard and soft landscaping planning conditions. For example, the use of gravel

surrounded by green and cars concealed by higher shrubs in the front. There are good examples of this in the immediate area, for instance, No 57 next door.

(The Town Council wants to make clear that it encourages innovative design that responds sensitively to character in new ways – the renovation of the Fat Face shop on the High Street, for instance, where the Council liaised with the developer to achieve good outcomes).

Additional Relevant Policies/Guidance

NPPF 2019 Pre-application engagement and front-loading

39. Early engagement has significant potential to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the planning application system for all parties. Good quality pre-application discussion enables better coordination between public and private resources and improved outcomes for the community.

40. Local planning authorities have a key role to play in encouraging other parties to take maximum advantage of the pre-application stage. They cannot require that a developer engages with them before submitting a planning application, but they should encourage take-up of any pre-application services they offer. *They should also, where they think this would be beneficial, encourage any applicants who are not already required to do so by law to engage with the local community and, where relevant, with statutory and non-statutory consultees, before submitting their applications.*

WLP – 8.29 Design. “Application of [good] design principles can accommodate different architectural styles while complementing and strengthening local distinctiveness. Innovative design is encouraged where it demonstrates a high quality design approach and is respectful of its setting.” (Para 8.170,P.253)

“Landscaping, both hard and soft, makes a key contribution to the overall quality and feel of development and proposals should provide details of good quality landscaping.” (Para 8.172, P. 253)

WLP 8.32 Housing Density and Design states that applications must – “make use of the site in a manner that protects and enhances the distinctiveness and character of the area”

WLP 8.33 Residential Gardens and Urban infilling – see whole policy for requirements

Permitted Development Rights for Householders, Technical Guidance 2017

Conditions

A.3 Development is permitted by Class A subject to the following conditions-

(a) the materials used in any exterior work (other than materials used in the construction of a conservatory) shall be of a similar appearance to those used in the construction of the exterior of the existing dwelling house

The condition above is intended to ensure that any works to enlarge, alter or improve a house result in an appearance that minimises visual impact and is sympathetic to existing development. This means that the materials used should be of similar visual appearance to those in the existing house, but does not mean that they need to be the same materials. 32 (Italics added.) For example:

□ the external walls of an extension should be constructed of materials that provide a similar visual appearance - for example in terms of colour and style of brick used - to the materials used in existing house walls

□ a pitched roof on an extension should be clad in tiles that give a similar visual appearance to those used on the existing house roof. Again, colour and style will be important considerations; flat roofs will not normally have any visual impact and so, where this is the case, the need for materials of similar appearance should not apply

□ it may be appropriate to replace existing windows with new uPVC double-glazed windows or include them in an extension even if there are no such windows in the existing house. *What is important is that they give a similar visual appearance to those in the existing house, for example in terms of their overall shape, and the colour and size of the frames. (Italics added.)*

Southwold Town Council

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