

Erection of New Dwelling House at 6 Caestory Avenue, Raglan, NP15 2EH
Planning Application Ref DC/2018/00096



Background

A planning application for the above development was registered as valid on 24 January 2018. Following discussions with the Development Management case officer the initially submitted scheme has been revised to lower the ridge height from 9.5m to 8.3m, reduce the height of the secondary garage element by 0.5m and remove the external chimney. The application has also been amended to ensure that six of the eight Birch trees on the western boundary with the adjoining rear garden are retained.

The development has received a number of objections from neighbours and Raglan Community Council. And although the Development Management case officer's report to Planning Committee on July 3 2018 answered all the concerns and provided a clear justification for allowing the scheme to proceed, Planning Committee members deferred consideration of the scheme and requested the applicant to amend the scheme.

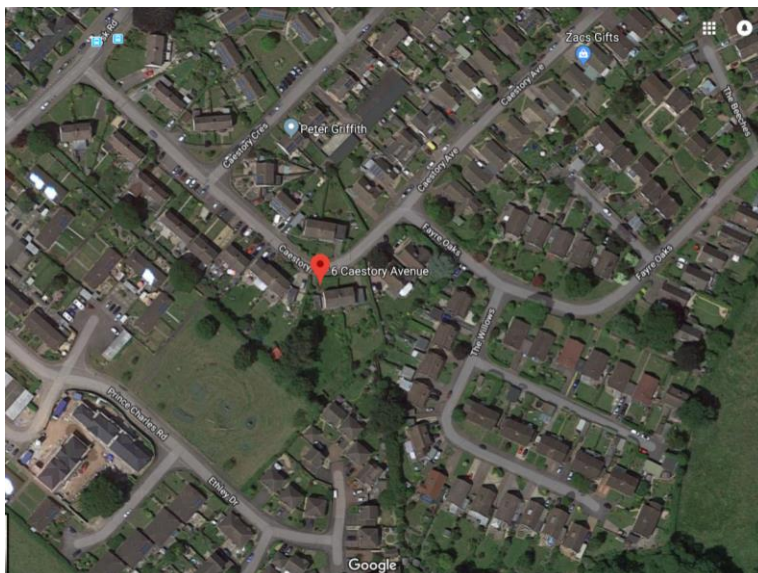
The author, who is an established Chartered Town Planner with over 35 years professional experience, visited the site on July 18 and has examined the proposed plans and Development management case officer's report to Planning Committee.

This short report details why the Planning Committee has no defensible or sustainable grounds for resisting or requesting changes to the proposed dwelling which conforms entirely to the national planning guidance as expressed in PPG Wales and the Council's LDP policies and generally accepted development guidelines adopted in the Supplementary Planning Guidance of many LPAs in Wales.

Development Proposed

The development lies in the adopted settlement boundary of Raglan. The character of the area is residential with a mixture of housing styles, densities with generally well maintained front gardens. The dwelling does not lie in Conservation Area or in a designated or protected landscape.

The development proposes one single detached two storey dwelling house to the south of the large rear garden of 6 Caestory Rd. The principle orientation would be to the north west. The proposed dwelling is mainly two storey with rooms in the roof space with an attached single storey garage element with a room above and circulation space.



The site is well enclosed by large mature trees and hedges and well screened from Caestory Avenue and neighbouring gardens and from the play area and surrounding houses.

Mature Western Boundary



View South East Towards Ethley Drive



View North Towards 6 and 8 Caestory Av



View Towards Site Looking North



The location and orientation of the proposed dwelling ensures that standard objectively assessed guidelines used extensively in local planning authorities in Wales and England are met. The Council does not appear to have adopted SPG on issues such as Infill Sites or Residential Amenity but other LPAs have guidance that uses common standards such as distances between habitable room windows and neighbouring boundaries, distances between habitable room windows and set back of dwellings from boundaries.

So, for example, claims of overshadowing and overdevelopment can be dismissed on the grounds that the development is located so that habitable room windows of the proposed dwelling are located a minimum distance of 10.5m away from the garden boundary of surrounding development. This is a

well-established guideline adopted in most LPAS nationally and especially where land is flat and boundaries are well established and visually strong. ensures that the development would be acceptable.

So, for example the habitable room window in the story and a half south western side elevation is some 16m away from the front garden of the nearest property in Ethley Drive that lies to the south east of site. The rear garden at Ethley Drive is located 10.5m away from the windows on the eastern side elevation window. It will be also being noted that alongside the required distance between habitable room windows and the neighbouring gardens is the fact that the boundary on the eastern side is formed by a mature hedge. Habitable room windows on the western (front) elevation of the proposed dwelling lie 11m away from rear garden to 4 Caestory Avenue with this boundary being formed of mature birch trees. On the proposed side elevation facing north , habitable room windows would be located 12m away from the proposed common garden boundary with the host dwelling at 6 Caestory Av and a minimum 10.5m but on average longer between windows facing the rear garden of 8 Caestory Avenue

In a similar manner, no habitable windows in the new dwelling would lie within a 21m distance with direct views into adjoining habitable room windows. So, for example windows on the northern side elevation would lie 25m away from the main rear wall of 6 Caestory and 28m from 8 Caestory. Windows on the front, western elevation would lie 34m from the side wall of 4 Caestory. While a rear, eastern facing first floor obscurely glazed bathroom window would lie 15m away from the rear of the closest dwelling in Ethley Drive, it will be noted that the angle of view between the windows is very acute and not direct. Therefore, the development would clearly comply with the Council's objectively set guidelines and there would be no adverse overlooking resulting in poor amenity for the proposed dwelling or for neighbours.

The proposal would result in the host dwelling having a plot size 476 sq m with an amenity area of 167 sq m. The proposed dwelling would have a plot size of 918 sq m and a proposed amenity area of 511 sqm. The footprint size of the new dwelling including a garage would be 130 sqm. The footprint to plot size ratio would therefore be 14%.

In terms of location and orientation, the dwelling is set within a very spacious plot with distances between the dwelling and the nearest boundary of 3.8m to the south, 10.5 to the east and south east, 12m to the north and 9m to the west. These distances further demonstrate that with such a set back from boundaries with neighbours, then the two and a half storey building could not be assessed as being over dominant or overshadowing of neighbouring dwellings or gardens.

In terms of density the proposed plot would be in keeping with the surrounding character of the area that already display a diversity of densities. The proposed plot size of 918 sqm would produce a dwellings per hectare (dph) density of 11. As indicated in the case officer's report, the three dwellings 4,6,8 Caestory by reason of their location on a bend are much larger than surrounding development. These existing densities are:

4 Caestory Av (928 sq m) 11 dph (dwellings per hectare)

6 Caestory Av (1394 sq m) 7 dph

8 Caestory Av (765 sq m) 13 dph

Numbers 2 and 4 to the east and 2 Caestory Av to the west are also larger plots when compared with densities in other parts of Caestory Av and to the south at Ethley Drive and south east at The Willows.

2 Caestory Av (420 sq m) 23 (dph)

2 Fayre Oaks (720 sq m) 14 dph

4 Fayre Oaks (450 sq m) 22 dph

This contrasts with dwellings further to the west such as 24 Caestory Av where densities rise at 238 sqm and 42 dph.



Case Officer's Report to Planning Committee

The case officer's report to Planning Committee describes the proposal and explains that the development conforms with Strategic policies and more detailed Development Plan policies as adopted in the Council's LDP.

Design

The case officer rightly accepts that in overall design terms the dwelling is acceptable and given its overall height, mass, scale and external materials complements the appearance of the area. As indicated earlier, the client has already been willing to amend the scheme and further design limitations are unnecessary and unwelcome.

Access

Access to the host dwelling and new dwelling to the rear would be off the existing highway access to the west of the host dwelling. Three car parking spaces and circulation space would be provided to the host and new dwelling.

Residential Amenity

The case officer rightly concludes that *'distances between the proposed new dwelling, habitable windows and neighbouring gardens and dwellings is considered to be sufficient so as not to lead to a significant loss of privacy for any occupiers'*. The case officer also correctly judges that the dwelling would also not have an overbearing impact on adjoining properties in line with Policy EP1. Our additional justification provided above in terms of objective evidence supports the assessment of the case officer.

Ecology and Trees

Six of the eight birch trees are to be retained with two replacement trees to be planted to replace the trees lost. The case officer notes the retention of the boundary hedges that are very well established and offer significant screening. The development therefore conforms with nature conservation policy NE1 of the LDP.

Conclusion

There are no sustainable or defensible reasons for the current proposals presented before Committee to refuse the application. Especially given the changes already made to the application. My advice is that if the Council be refused to reappraise its decision not to approve the application based on this further report. However, if the Council were not to approve the scheme in its current form then I would advise that an appeal be made to the Planning Inspectorate and an application for costs made.

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