

Officer Report – Chigwell Parish Council Planning Committee

Application: EPF/1356/26

Address: 50 Forest Lane, Chigwell, IG7 5AE

Proposal: Extensions and alterations to provide a basement-level gym.

Recommendation

No objection, provided EFDC is satisfied that the revised Basement Impact Assessment has been properly checked and that suitable construction and tree-protection conditions are imposed.

Site and Proposal

The application relates to a large detached house at the junction of Forest Lane and Manor Road. The proposal is for an 88.4m² basement gym beneath a ground-floor playroom/lounge in the existing rear pool-house area. The basement would be formed by digging approximately 1.55m below the existing floor level.

Relevant Planning History

EPF/0207/26 – Similar proposal for a basement gym – **Refused** because the Basement Impact Assessment had been prepared for an earlier redevelopment scheme, did not clearly explain how the basement could be built beneath the house now standing, and contained unexplained failed structural calculations. EFDC was therefore not satisfied that the proposal complied with Local Plan Policy DM12.

EPF/0734/24 – Extensions and alterations retaining existing parts of the building and removing the previously proposed basement – **Approved**.

EPF/0708/22 – Reduction in the size of the approved replacement dwelling – **Approved**.

EPF/2574/21 – Demolition of the existing house and construction of a replacement seven-bedroom dwelling – **Approved**.

EPF/1630/20 – Replacement dwelling with a basement and loft dormers – **Refused**.

Assessment

The main question is whether the new information overcomes the reason for refusing EPF/0207/26.

The revised Basement Impact Assessment now explains how the work would be carried out within the building that is already on the site. The existing pool-house foundations would remain in place, excavation would take place inside them, the existing pool would be filled and a new reinforced concrete floor would be connected to the retained foundations. Temporary supports would be used while the work was carried out.

The new structural calculations show passing results for the main matters tested, including reinforcement, shear strength and deflection. The report also says that a chartered structural engineer would inspect the work while it is being carried out.

One paragraph still refers to demolition of the whole building and excavation across its full footprint. This does not match the detailed construction method elsewhere in the report and appears to be wording left over from the earlier scheme rather than the method now proposed.

The geological appendix includes a borehole record from another property in Forest Lane rather than from No. 50 itself. This means it does not prove the exact ground conditions beneath the application site. However, the site is understood to be on London Clay, the proposed excavation is relatively shallow and would remain within existing deep foundations. On its own, the use of a nearby borehole is not considered a strong reason for the Parish Council to object, but EFDC should ensure that the applicant's engineer is satisfied that the information is adequate before work starts.

EFDC's Flood Risk Engineer has raised no objection and considers that the proposal would not increase drainage or surface-water flood risk. The tree report also concludes that the excavation would remain outside the protected trees' root areas, provided the proposed tree-protection measures are followed.

Conclusion

The revised information is much more specific to the building now on the site and appears to address the main reason for the earlier refusal. There are some drafting errors and technical points that EFDC should check, but these do not provide a clear planning reason for the Parish Council to object.

Recommended Resolution

Chigwell Parish Council has **no objection** to EPF/1356/26, subject to EFDC being satisfied with the revised Basement Impact Assessment and requiring the work to follow the approved construction method, be supervised by a suitably qualified structural engineer and include appropriate controls for tree protection, construction traffic, noise, dust and vibration.