

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 22 November 2016

by Martin Andrews MA(Planning) BSc(Econ) DipTP & DipTP(Dist) MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government

Decision date: 05 December 2016

Appeal Ref: APP/A3655/D/16/3159581

Hassocks, West Hill Road, Woking, Surrey GU22 7UL

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mr Jonathan Garrington against the decision of Woking Borough Council.
 - The application, Ref. PLAN/2016/0537, dated 29 April 2016, was refused by notice dated 6 July 2016.
 - The development proposed is demolition of the existing garage and erection of a new single storey rear and two storey side extension with integral garage.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for demolition of the existing garage and erection of a new single storey rear and two storey side extension with integral garage at Hassocks, West Hill Road, Woking, Surrey in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref. PLAN/2016/0537, dated 29 April 2016, subject to the following conditions:
 - 1) The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than three years from the date of this decision;
 - 2) The development shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: Drawing Series P1306: Plan Nos. PL.01; PL.02; PL.03; PL.04; PL.05A; PL.06; PL.07; PL.08; PL.09;
 - 3) Prior to the commencement of the development hereby permitted, details and samples of the materials to be used in the external surfaces of the extensions shall be submitted in writing to the Local Planning Authority for its approval. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are (i) the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the existing dwelling, and (ii) whether the proposal would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Mount Hermon Conservation Area.

Reasons

3. On the first issue I saw on my visit that the appeal property is a substantial and attractive detached house of considerable design merit, albeit with a part 'mock Tudor' front elevation. Ashbury House, the next door property to the north, is
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of an identical design, and although there are intervening trees the appearance of the two dwellings and this part of the West Hill Road street scene are enhanced by them being read together as a matching pair.

4. The conservation area includes a variety of dwelling types and as the grounds of appeal point out, some of them are of no discernible architectural merit. However, I note that both the Council's Delegation Report on the appeal application and the grounds of appeal refer to the Council's 'Heritage of Woking' SPD 2000 and that in describing the Mount Hermon Conservation Area this states that *'The majority of the original houses in the area have a distinctive architectural style with steep pitched roofs and decorative timberwork to the elevations.....'*
5. Hassocks is clearly a case in point and the proportions and appearance of the dwelling are therefore a constraint on the scale and form of any additions to it. However, in terms of the effect on the street scene, the appeal scheme retains the existing frontage and seeks to replace the unsightly flat roofed double garage. The two storey side extension would be set down from the existing ridge and set back both from the front and rear elevations, and this reflects the guidance in the Woking Design SPD 2014.
6. There is an argument for reducing the width of the extension but on the other hand too much of a reduction would result in the addition appearing as a 'weak' feature disproportionately small to the double fronted host building and not in harmony with it. Provided a minimum gap of one metre is left to the side boundary (this is clear on the ground floor plan of Drawing PL.06 but less clear on Drawing No. PL.01) I consider that by being set down and set back the side extension would be acceptably subservient.
7. The 'simpler and cleaner' design of the front elevation of the two storey addition is also an appropriate choice in this case as it enables the extension to be read as a separate entity that on the one hand harmonises with the existing building but on the other hand does not compete with it. The proposed first floor windows and cills would match the existing, as would the render. I have some reservations as to the utilitarian form of the double garage door, but if the Council shares this concern its detailed appearance could to some extent be addressed through the external materials condition.
8. The Council has objected to the scale of the single storey extensions to the rear. However, Hassocks is not identified as a heritage asset and as the rear garden is of a good size and these extensions would to all intents and purposes be unseen from West Hill Road, I see no reason for rejecting the proposal on this basis.
9. Overall on issue (i) I consider that the proposed extension would not have a harmful effect on the character and appearance of the existing building. This finding is also material to my consideration of issue (ii), the effect on the conservation area. However, an additional point for issue (ii) is the reduction of the gap between Hassocks and West Hill Lodge on its southern side.
10. In this regard the proposal would slightly increase the gap at ground level because it is slightly narrower than the footprint of the existing garage. The difference is therefore at first floor and roof level and in this regard the Council

correctly refers to the reduction of the existing space between Hassocks and West Hill Lodge.

11. This is a valid point as regards the spacious character of the conservation area, but any adverse effect would be substantially ameliorated by the fact that West Hill Lodge is a chalet bungalow. The roof pitch is fairly shallow and slopes away from the appeal site, with a ridge height substantially lower than that of Hassocks. The combination of these factors would avoid any perception of terracing and as a result the appeal proposal for the most part retains the spacious character of this part of West Hill Road.
12. Overall on this issue I consider that any slight harm to the conservation area through the reduction in space about the host building would be offset by the improvement arising from the demolition of the existing unsightly garage and its replacement with a well designed and sufficiently subservient two storey extension. The effect of this, when the appeal scheme is taken as a whole, is to preserve the character and appearance of the Mount Hermon Conservation Area. I therefore see no harmful conflict with Policies HSG23 & BE9 of the Woking Borough Local Plan 1999; Policies CS20 & CS21 of the Woking Core Strategy 2012; the Council's SPD and the National Planning Policy Framework 2012.
13. I shall therefore allow the appeal. A condition requiring the development to be carried out in accordance with the approved plans is needed for the avoidance of doubt. A condition requiring the Council's prior approval of external materials will ensure that the extensions harmonise with the existing building.

Martin Andrews

INSPECTOR