

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 20 March 2017

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: 27 March 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/Y3615/D/17/3167491

12 Aldersey Road, Guildford GU1 2ES

- 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 George Makowski against the decision of Guildford Borough Council.
 - The application, Ref. 16/P/01823, dated 2 September 2016, was refused by notice dated 26 October 2016.
 - The development proposed is the demolition of part of the existing house and attached garage and construction of a new wing that replicates the right hand wing to form a united and symmetrical façade with an addition of a new garage recessed to the side of the house.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for the demolition of part of the existing house and attached garage and construction of a new wing that replicates the right hand wing to form a united and symmetrical façade with an addition of a new garage recessed to the side of the house at 12 Aldersey Road, Guildford in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref. 16/P/01823, dated 2 September 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 Nos. PL 01 Rev. A; PL 02 Rev. A; PL 03 Rev. A; PL 04 Rev. A; PL 05 Rev. A; PL 06 Rev. A; PL 07 Rev. A; PL 08 Rev. A; PL 15;
 - 3) Where as specified on the application form, the materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of the development hereby permitted shall match those used in the existing building.

Preliminary Matter and Main Issues

2. There are errors on the submitted plans. The existing and proposed rear elevations are wrongly referred to as 'Front' and in my opinion this elevation is also more accurately described as NE, with the front elevation SW. The elevations facing No. 10 and No. 14 are SE and NW respectively.
 3. The main issues are: (i) the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area, and (ii) the effect on the living conditions for the occupiers of No. 14 as regards outlook and light.
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Reasons

4. On the first issue, from my reading of the Planning Officer's report the appraisal of the appeal application has been carried out with close reference to the Council's Residential Extensions Supplementary Planning Guidance 2003 ('the SPG') and is therefore focused on the alterations to the existing building and their impact on its character and appearance. Ostensibly this is a reasonable approach, but the appeal scheme involves such major changes that a more appropriate appraisal is whether the effectively 'newly designed' building would be both of a pleasing appearance and in keeping with its context.
5. The difference in approach between on the one hand the need to ensure that additions are in keeping with an existing building and on the other hand to assess whether or not a fundamental re-design of a building is appropriate is often not recognised in Local Planning Authority design guidance, and in my view this is a case in point where the SPG is not particularly relevant. Accordingly, the test is whether the appeal scheme would be broadly in accordance with Policies G5 and H8 of the Guildford Borough Local Plan 2003 ('the Local Plan') and Section 7: 'Requiring Good Design' of the National Planning Policy Framework 2012 ('the Framework') rather than the Design SPG.
6. Fundamental to the appraisal of the proposal is that the character and appearance of Aldersey Road is one of a low density residential area with large houses of a variety of styles on generously sized plots. There is no particular pattern or rhythm to the street scene as regards the design of the dwellings; nor is there a definitive period style other than generally within the C20th. Taking this into account I note that the newly designed and enlarged building would not move any closer to the road than the existing main front gable and that the spacious character of its setting would be maintained by the proposed single storey garage on the flank to No. 10 and the existing annex of subordinate height attached to No. 14.
7. Furthermore, the creation of a symmetrical front elevation has design merit and is in my view preferable to the existing two storey stepped design that terminates in the somewhat unappealing flat roofed single storey garage. The twin gabled design is undoubtedly more assertive and results in a substantial increase in size, but I consider that both the site and its context can readily accommodate this. I also note that several neighbours also consider the re-designed dwelling to be an improvement on the existing, and in keeping with its surroundings.
8. The Council has criticised eight roof lights on the front roof as adding clutter but in any single aspect from the road towards the dwelling only a few of these would be visible. I am however minded to agree with the Council's reservations as to the large central roof light but this is insufficient to cause a rejection of the proposal as a whole, particularly having regard to paragraphs 59 and 60 of the Framework, which indicate the need for a flexible approach to the management of development by Local Planning Authorities. Overall on this issue I conclude that the appeal scheme would not be in harmful conflict with Local Plan Policies G5 & H8 and Government policy on design in Section 7 of the Framework.

9. Turning briefly to the second issue, because the rear elevations of both Nos. 12 and 14 face north east there would be little if any overshadowing of the ancillary accommodation at No. 14. I also note that there is already a large tree in the garden of No. 14 very close to the annex, which has an effect on the amount of light. In terms of the effect on outlook, the boundary fence already restricts the peripheral views from the main ground floor window of the annex, and because of the large garden of No. 14 the main outlook from both this window and the one above it would remain. I also note that the occupier of No. 14 does not consider the proposal to be '*in any way un-neighbourly*'.
10. On this issue I find that the appeal scheme would not unacceptably harm the living conditions as regards light and outlook for the occupiers of No. 14. There would therefore be no harmful conflict with Local Plan Policies G1(3) & H8; the Council's SPG and the core planning principles of the Framework.
11. I shall therefore allow the appeal. A condition requiring the development to be carried out in accordance with the submitted plans (other than those matters referred to in paragraph 2 above) is needed for the avoidance of doubt. A condition requiring matching materials where appropriate is needed to safeguard the building's appearance and thereby maintain visual amenity.

Martin Andrews

INSPECTOR