
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 14 March 2017

by Alex Hutson MATP CMLI MArborA

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

Decision date: 4 April 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/X0360/W/16/3165572
108 Silverdale Road, Earley RG6 7LU

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a failure to give notice within the prescribed period of a decision on an application for planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mr Anand Rengasamy against Wokingham Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 161943, is dated 11 July 2016.
 - The development proposed is "Single storey rear extension. First floor rear and side extension. Garage extended forward."
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed and planning permission for "Single storey rear extension. First floor rear and side extension. Garage extended forward." is refused.

Preliminary matters

2. The appeal follows the failure of the Council to determine the planning application. The Council's Officer's Report and Appeal Statement sets out the reasons why it considers the proposal would be unacceptable and this has formed the basis of the main issue.
3. A number of revised plans have been submitted as part of the appeal to correct some inconsistencies between the plans considered during the original planning application process. Whilst the appeal process is not intended to bypass the democratic planning process, the revised plans do not fundamentally change the proposal. The Council has had sight of these plans and has confirmed that it has no objection to my acceptance of them. I am therefore satisfied that my acceptance of the plans would not compromise or prejudice the interests of the Council or any interested parties. I have therefore considered the appeal on the basis of these revised plans.

Main issue

4. On the basis of the evidence before me, I consider the main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

5. Dwellings along the southern side of this part of Silverdale Road tend to be two-storeys in height and semi-detached. Each pair of dwellings, which are arranged in a stepped formation, are separated by repeated and broadly even
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gaps, noticeably at first floor level. These gaps provide a strong rhythm within the streetscape. They also allow views through to mature trees within rear gardens and an area of woodland to the south of these dwellings, which provides a verdant and spatial quality to the streetscape and area. The gaps between dwellings therefore contribute positively to the character and appearance of the area.

6. The appeal property is a two storey, semi-detached dwelling, with a single storey garage set back from its front elevation. It maintains a generous gap at first floor level, above the garage, with the adjacent pair of semi-detached dwellings, 104 and 106 Silverdale Road, and is stepped forwards from these dwellings. This allows views from the public realm through to trees within rear gardens and within the woodland beyond. The gap between the appeal property and Nos 104 and 106 at first floor level is therefore consistent with and makes a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the area.
7. The proposal would introduce a part single, part two storey rear extension and a two storey side extension over part of the existing single storey garage. I acknowledge that the hipped roof of the two storey side extension would reduce the overall massing of this element of the proposal. However, its presence would considerably reduce the characteristic gap at first floor level and would substantially obscure views from along Silverdale Road through the gap to mature trees beyond. This would substantially erode the spatial and verdant qualities of the streetscape and would appear out of keeping with the rhythm of the streetscape and the prevailing pattern of development in the area. Moreover, the proposal in general would display an odd assortment of roof styles which would fail to appropriately tie in with the appearance of the appeal property.
8. Whilst the appellant has suggested some amendments could be undertaken to the design of the side extension element of the proposal to overcome these concerns, I must consider the appeal on the basis of the plans before me. In addition, any amendments are unlikely to overcome the inherent harm which would arise from the erosion of the gap and the considerable reduction in views through it.
9. I note that the appellant makes reference to other examples of two storey side extensions in the area. However, these are not in the immediate vicinity of the appeal property and therefore do not share the same context. As such, these examples do not alter my decision.
10. I therefore conclude that the proposal would result in significant harm to the character and appearance of the area. This would be contrary to Policies CP1- Sustainable Development and CP3- General Principles for Development, of the Wokingham Borough Council Adopted Core Strategy Development Plan Document 2010. These policies require, amongst other things, development to maintain or enhance the high quality of the environment, to provide attractive schemes and high quality design and to respect the character of the area.
11. The proposal would also be contrary to the guidance of the Wokingham Borough Council Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document 2012, which advises that extensions should be well designed, respond positively to the original building and contribute positively to local character.

Other matters

12. I acknowledge that the proposal would provide additional living space for the appellant and his family. However, this personal benefit would not be sufficient to outweigh the harm that I have identified to the character and appearance of the area.
13. The appellant has raised some concerns over the Council's procedures in dealing with his application. Nevertheless, this is not a matter for my consideration in an appeal under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.
14. Whilst I note that there have been no objections from any interested parties, this does not inevitably mean that there would be an absence of harm. Moreover, the Council has set out why it does not consider the proposal would be acceptable in terms of its effect on the character and appearance of the area, having regard to its merits and to relevant planning policy requirements. As can be seen from my findings above, this is a position that I would concur with.

Conclusion

15. For the reasons set out above and having regard to all other matters, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed and planning permission refused.

Alex Hutson

INSPECTOR