
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 18 April 2017

by J Ayres BA (Hons) Solicitor

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

Decision date: 5th May 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/K3605/D/17/3170736
18 Oakdale Road, Weybridge KT13 8EJ

- 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 Nigel Engeham against the decision of Elmbridge Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 2016/3851, dated 23 November 2016, was refused by notice dated 10 February 2017.
 - The development proposed is described as “a piggy back loft conversion”.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

3. The houses along Oakdale Road create a sense of uniformity in terms of their architectural style. There is some variation at times but this is sporadic and does not take away from the overarching sense of consistency. The dwellings have relatively small separation distances and the majority of them share similar facades which enhances the sense of unity of the area. The appeal dwelling is a detached two storey dwelling with a modest front garden; it is one of the houses within the streetscene which contributes to the uniform character of the area.
 4. The proposal would increase the ridgeline of the host dwelling in order to accommodate habitable space in the loft. As a result the extension would be materially higher than that of the host dwelling and the scale and height of the proposal would alter the roofline significantly. The overall effect of this would result in an extension that, due to its height, mass and scale, would perch uncomfortably on top of the host dwelling.
 5. The appellant has set back the proposal and suggested materials that match, and are sympathetic to, the host dwelling. Notwithstanding this, the height, scale, mass and overall design of the proposal would appear visually contrived when considering the host dwelling amongst the other, very similar, dwellings in the road. The proposal would introduce an alien form to the host dwelling, creating a dominant feature rising up considerably from behind the chimney
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- stack, and breaking the uniform roofline that makes an important contribution to the appearance of the host dwelling and its relationship to the streetscene.
6. The properties along the road follow the same line and pattern of development, with similar spacing between each property. At the time of my site visit I walked the length of the road in both directions, as I drew nearer to the appeal property the roofline was clearly visible, sitting comfortably amongst the surrounding properties. The increased height of the proposal would materially diminish the sense of space between the properties and significantly detract from the consistent, regular, uniformity that exists along the road, causing harm to the character and appearance of the streetscene.
 7. The consistent roofline within the street can be seen from a distance, and although the impact of the proposal is more limited when viewed from far away, the change in height that the proposal would introduce would result in an obtrusive and dominant form of development.
 8. The unvarying style of the built form is a significant element of the character and appearance of the area. When viewed in this context, due to its height, scale and mass, the proposal would be an incongruous addition that would appear at odds to the consistent style of architecture along the road. The proposal would break up the current fixed pattern of the rooflines, and consequently would harm what is an integral part of the character and appearance of the area.
 9. The appellant has drawn my attention to other, similar, roof extensions that have been granted. I do not have full details of the context of those permissions, and therefore cannot assess whether there are any similarities in terms of the effect on the character and appearance of the area. In any event, the existence of development elsewhere does not represent an appropriate reason to allow a proposal that would cause harm. I have considered this appeal on its own merits and, for the reasons given, find that it would cause considerable harm to the character and appearance of the area.
 10. I have taken into account representations relating to the fallback position in respect of the alteration of the roof using permitted development rights. However I have not been provided with any evidence detailing how this could be achieved to accord with permitted development rights. I note the Council's comments relating to permitted volume limits and the need for significant structural alterations to enact any permitted development scheme. In light of the extent of works that would appear to be necessary, and the absence of substantive evidence that I can assess in comparison to the appeal scheme, I have attached limited weight to the fallback position.
 11. Consequently, overall, I conclude that due to the height, mass and scale of the proposal, it would result in harm to the character and appearance of the area and as such it would fail to comply with policy CS17 of the Elmbridge Core Strategy 2011. It would not accord with policy DM2 of the Elmbridge Development Management Plan 2015 or the advice contained in the Design and Character SPD (Home Extensions Guide) 2012 in respect of its design and relationship with the host dwelling.

Other matters

12. I have had regard to the fact that the proposal would provide additional accommodation for the occupants of the property. However I note that permission has been granted for a basement which would provide additional habitable space for the occupants without harming the character and appearance of the area. As such, I consider the additional benefit to the living conditions of the occupants associated with the proposal would be relatively limited. Local concerns have been raised regarding the impact of the proposal on the amenity of neighbouring properties, and the impact on the garden space of the host dwelling. Both the appellant and Council are agreed that the proposal would not result in any significant impact in relation to these issues and I see no reason to take a different view.
13. The three roles of sustainable development are mutually dependent. Paragraphs 6-9 of the Framework indicate that 'sustainability' should not be interpreted narrowly. Elements of sustainable development cannot be undertaken in isolation but should be sought jointly and simultaneously. Sustainable development also includes 'seeking positive improvements in the quality of the built, natural and historic environment as well as in people's quality of life'. For the reasons given, I conclude that the harm identified to the character and appearance of the area would significantly outweigh the benefits of the proposal and its lack of harm to living conditions. As such, the proposal would not represent sustainable development.

Conclusion

14. For the reasons above and taking account of other matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should not succeed.

Johanna Ayres

INSPECTOR