

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 3 July 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: 12 July 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/Y3615/D/17/3175344

Chantries Retreat, Clifford Manor Road, Guildford GU4 8AG

- 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 Gilbert against the decision of Guildford Borough Council.
 - The application, Ref. 17/P/00171, dated 30 January 2017, was refused by notice dated 27 March 2017.
 - The development proposed is described as 'extension to above garage room'.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for front and rear side extensions above the garage at Chantries Retreat, Clifford Manor Road, Guildford in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref. 17/P/00171, dated 30 January 2017, 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 No. Series 1612-CRCR: Drawings 01 Rev. A; 02 Rev. A; 03 Rev. A; 04 Rev. A;
 - 3) 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 Matters

2. I have used the Council's description of the proposal in my Decision as it summarises the proposal rather more clearly than that on the application form.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the appearance of the existing dwelling.

Reasons

4. The Council acknowledges that although the garage is the most visible element of the dwelling from the public realm, because it is set well back from Clifford Manor Road the proposed changes would not affect the character and appearance of the area. I agree with this assessment.
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5. As a result, the Council's concern is focused on the effect of the alterations and additions to the building itself. The front elevation of the property is of an essentially contemporary design with symmetrical and extensively glazed twin gables. Because of its set back and lower ridge line the existing garage and first floor accommodation on the southern flank appears as subservient to the main building.
6. The appeal proposal would substantially increase the floorspace at first floor level by means of a cantilevered extension to the front and a large dormer to the rear. Although both elements are criticised by the Council, paragraph 60 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2012 ('the Framework') says that *'Planning policies and decisions should not attempt to impose architectural styles or particular tastes and they should not stifle innovation, originality or initiative through unsubstantiated requirements to conform to certain development forms or styles. It is, however, proper to seek to promote or reinforce local distinctiveness'*.
7. It seems to me that this may be a case in point, as the existing building stands alone, is not prominent in the street scene and because of this and its individual contemporary design cannot be regarded as 'locally distinctive'. Furthermore, the proposed changes to the building do not alter the essentially subordinate form and appearance of the garage element, as it would remain lower than the main dwelling and continue to be set back from its front elevation, albeit with reduced distances in both cases.
8. In terms of design detail I disagree with the Council that the different design including the cantilever element would read awkwardly with the existing dwelling. A reasonable test is whether such an alteration or extension would draw the eye and be perceived negatively as incongruous or disproportionate, and in my assessment it would not.
9. In terms of the rear dormer, I can see the point being made but with its position well down on the roof slope, the unusually small window, flank position and occupation of only a modest amount of the roof plane, it is far removed from the typical oversized and over-dominant dormer that so often harmfully prioritises the need for extra accommodation over the aesthetics of a building.
10. Because of these factors I consider the dormer reads successfully as part of the overall rear elevation, but even if I am wrong on this point its discreet position on the dwelling and the adjoining tall trees would ensure that there would be no wider impact.
11. Overall, I conclude that the appearance of the existing building would not be harmed. There would therefore be no meaningful conflict with Policies H9 and G5 of the Guildford Borough Local Plan 2003; the Council's Residential Extensions SPG and Section 7: 'Requiring Good Design' of the Framework.
12. The appeal is therefore allowed, subject to a compliance with plans condition for the avoidance of doubt and a matching external materials condition to safeguard the appearance of the dwelling in the interests of visual amenity.

Martin Andrews

INSPECTOR