



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 10 October 2017

by H Lock BA(Hons) DipTP MRTPI

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

Decision date: 19 October 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/X0360/D/17/3179818

233 Nine Mile Ride, Finchampstead, Berkshire, RG40 3QA

- 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 Andrew P Herbert against the decision of Wokingham Borough Council.
 - The application Ref. 170385, dated 6 February 2017, was refused by notice dated 15 May 2017.
 - The development proposed is conversion of existing bungalow to a house. Reshape existing garage roof to match house.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the street scene and the wider area.

Reasons

3. The appeal property is a single-storey detached dwelling on a road containing properties which vary in size, scale, form and design. It sits between a two-storey house (No.231) and a single-storey dwelling with rooms in the extended roofspace. The topography is such that the appeal property is located towards the brow of a hill, but set below the level of the road and the dwellings opposite. To an extent, the respective site levels and the separation distance between the appeal property and No. 231 ameliorate the difference in scale and height between the two.
4. The proposed extension to the appeal property would result in a dwelling akin to the scale of the neighbouring house, No.231. However, the appellant confirms that the proposal would involve the raising of the existing roof by 2.3 metres. Whilst in some contexts this may be appropriate, this would result in a material increase in mass and bulk to the appeal property, which would be exacerbated by the inclusion of a two-storey front projection. The position of the appeal property towards a high point on the northern side of the road, and on higher ground than No.231, would create an unacceptably prominent and visually intrusive building in the street scene. The disparity in the heights of the appeal property and the lower buildings to the east would be significant and notable in the street scene.

5. Although there is a varied roofscape along Nine Mile Ride, on the basis of the information provided in this appeal, my assessment is that the proposed extension would result in a materially taller building that would protrude above the roof ridge of No.231¹. It would not respect the street scene or the character of the area, and would be in conflict with the aims of Policy CP3 of the Council's Core Strategy² (CS), which requires development to be of an appropriate scale in matters including mass, built form, height and character of the area. Although a guidance document only, the proposal would also conflict with aspects of the Borough Design Guide³, which requires extensions to contribute positively to the local character and to relate well to neighbouring properties, with extensions being clearly subservient to the form and scale of the original building in most situations.
6. The appellant has made reference to a number of developments undertaken in the vicinity, including conversions of single-storey to two-storey dwellings. However, no details have been supplied of planning permissions granted and the policies against which they were assessed. As such, whilst I have had regard to the relationship of neighbouring properties to the appeal dwelling, in the absence of details of those developments and the circumstances of their construction they offer limited support to the appeal proposal.
7. The existing garage has reasonably limited impact on the street scene as a result of its shallow profile, the ground levels relative to the footway, and the roadside enclosure. There is a tall pitched roof carport opposite the site, but its visual impact is reduced by the open design and intervening screen planting.
8. The appellant has drawn attention to a number of garages in front gardens along a stated 1.1 mile section of Nine Mile Ride, but again no details of the relevant planning permissions have been supplied. However, whilst it is evident that garages exist in front gardens along the road (and indeed, at the appeal site), the more immediate context in which the proposal would be viewed does not include garages of directly comparable siting and/or size. Moreover, most benefit from some screen planting. In this case, despite the proposed hipped roof, the increased scale of the garage directly adjacent to the footway would appear unacceptably intrusive and stark. Again, the scale, height and mass would not be appropriate at this point in the street scene in conflict with CS Policy CP3.
9. I note the appellant's assessment of comparative roof areas between the existing and extended dwelling and garage, but the roofs are only one aspect of the resultant buildings, and in particular, the perceived mass and bulk of the main house would materially increase as a result of the raised eaves and creation of a first floor.
10. I am mindful of the appellant's wish to remain at the site, and the reasons for requiring the first floor accommodation. Given the prevalence of two-storey houses in the vicinity I find no issue with this in principle. However, the scale and form of the proposed extension does not respect the local topography and context. Although the outlook from the appeal property may have changed as a

¹ Although the appellant refers to the "new house recently completed" as having a roof ridge height 2.2 metres above the appeal property, the letter from GRO Property Ltd/231 Nine Mile Ride submitted in support of the planning application states "the house [no.231] is higher than your bungalow at present by approximately 1500mm...."

² Wokingham Borough Local Development Framework Adopted Core Strategy Development Plan Document 2010

³ Wokingham Borough Council Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document 2012

result of neighbouring extensions, this in itself would not justify the appeal proposal. It is also unclear what other measures have been explored to reduce the effect of street lighting on the appeal property, but again this factor would not justify the development in its proposed form. As such, the appellant's stated need for the development would not outweigh the material harm to the street scene that would arise from the proposal.

11. I therefore conclude that the proposal would detract from the character and appearance of the appeal property and the wider street scene in conflict with the aims of CS Policy CP3 and the supporting guidance in the Borough Design Guide.

Other Matters

12. The appellant has raised issues relating to the processing and determination of the planning application, but these are not matters to be explored in a Section 78 planning appeal, which must be considered on its planning merits.

Conclusion

13. The National Planning Policy Framework establishes a presumption in favour of sustainable development, and part of its environmental strand is to contribute to protecting and enhancing the built environment. A core planning principle of the Framework is to always seek to secure high quality design, but for the reasons given above the proposal would not comply with this principle and would not be sustainable development supported through the Framework. As a consequence, I conclude that this appeal should be dismissed.

H Lock

INSPECTOR