



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 25 June 2019 by S Witherley BA, PGDiP, PGDiP, Cert CIH, Assoc RTPI

Decision by A U Ghafoor BSc (Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 9 July 2019

Appeal Ref: APP/C3620/W/19/3225775

19B Cannon Grove, Fetcham, Leatherhead, KT22 9LG

- 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 Paul Pocock against the decision of Mole Valley District Council.
 - The application Ref MO/2018/0623/PLA, dated 18 April 2018, was refused by notice dated 6 March 2019.
 - The development proposed is conversion of existing detached garage (detached) into habitable accommodation.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Appeal Procedure

2. The site visit was undertaken by an Appeal Planning Officer whose recommendation is set out below and to which the Inspector has had regard before deciding the appeal.

Main Issues

3. The effect of the development upon: 1) the character and appearance of the surrounding area, and 2) nearby occupiers' living conditions with regard to noise and general disturbance.

Reasons for the Recommendation - *Character and appearance*

4. The appeal building is a single-storey detached garage located to the rear of a car park, which is connected to the host property. This property is a two-storey, mixed use, building with a commercial unit at ground floor and residential accommodation above. Access to the garage is shared from the highway down the side of the terrace property and across the existing car park. To the northeast and east of the site are residential properties, which are predominately single storey.
 5. The proposal is to convert the garage into habitable accommodation. The proposed layout indicates that the garage would be converted to provide the necessary facilities for independent cooking, washing and sleeping. Whilst there are no drawings submitted showing a curtilage, the new dwelling would be physically and functionally separate, and there is no evidence to suggest any ancillary connection with the use of the host property.
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6. The proposal would alter the front elevation by replacing the existing garage door with a domestic sized window. This would significantly alter the appearance of the garage which would then appear inconsistent with the associated mixed-use appearance of the parade of shops. Alterations to the fenestration detail would give the garage the appearance of a small house rather than being an ancillary building. The proposal would, therefore, dilute the strong distinction between the commercial and residential areas.
7. Houses benefit from modest front gardens and grass verges that front a highway. Whilst the car parking to the front of the building would be retained, this would be in direct conflict with the setting of other residential developments in the area. Due to the distance between the appeal building and the highway this would not be consistent with the overall appearance of the setting of a house in the street scene.
8. The area includes some properties with outbuildings, but these do not erode the overall sense of openness and are defined as being ancillary to their associated host property, due to their size and form. Self-contained residential units in back-land position is not a feature of the street scene. An amended scheme was submitted which showed the reduction in bedrooms from two to one. Nonetheless, the self-contained residential conversion of the garage would not respect the area's pattern of settlement and enhance its character.
9. The proposal would erode the commercial character of the distinctive parade of shops and it would be at odds with the setting of residential development. I find that the proposal would therefore harm the character and appearance of the surrounding area. Accordingly, the scheme would conflict with Saved Policy ENV22 of the Mole Valley Local Plan 2000 (MVLN) and Policy CS14 of the Mole Valley Core Strategy 2009 (MVCS) or the Supplementary Planning Document Built-up Area Character Appraisal for Bookham and Fetcham 2010.

Living Conditions

10. The Council is concerned that the subdivision of the garage would result in the intensification of domestic use. There would be an increase in comings and goings associated with residential living, but the development would not give rise to significant level of disturbance. Noise emitted from its residential use would not adversely harm neighbours, because of the garage's location and position. The limited nature of the residential activity would not cause unacceptable levels of general disturbance. I find that the proposal would not materially harm the living conditions of surrounding neighbours. It would, therefore, comply with Policy ENV22 of the MVLN and MVCS Policy CS14.

Other Considerations

11. The Council accept that they cannot demonstrate a 5-year housing supply. Although the National Planning Policy Framework seeks to significantly increase the supply of housing, there is no evidence in respect of the level of shortfall in housing land supply or the type of housing that is required in the area. The proposed development, if allowed, would not make a significant contribution to the overall supply of housing in the area. Whilst there would be some economic and social benefit arising from the works to convert the building, due to the small scale of the proposal, these would be very modest.

Conclusion and recommendation

12. Drawing all the above together, the development would not cause harm to nearby residents' living conditions, but the scheme would have a significant adverse effect on the character and appearance of the surrounding area. There is conflict with local and national planning policies. On the other hand, limited weight is given to the housing supply argument, and economic and social benefits. The adverse impacts of the proposal as set out above, would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits. On balance, the finding on the second main issue and other considerations advanced do not outweigh my findings on the first main issue above.
13. For the reasons given above and having had regard to all other matters raised, it is recommended that the appeal should be dismissed.

S Witherley

APPEAL PLANNING OFFICER

Inspector's Decision

14. I have considered all the submitted evidence and the Appeal Planning Officer's report, and, on that basis, I too agree that the appeal should be dismissed.

A U Ghafoor

INSPECTOR