



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 28 June 2019

by Gary Deane BSc (Hons) DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 12th July 2019

Appeal Ref: APP/A3655/D/19/3226985

120 Hermitage Road, St Johns, Woking GU21 8TT

- 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 Alan Vickers against the decision of Woking Borough Council.
 - The application Ref PLAN/2019/0005, dated 2 January 2019, was refused by notice dated 18 March 2019.
 - The development proposed is the erection of a side and rear double storey extension to existing dwelling.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main issues

2. The main issues are the effect of the proposed development firstly, on the living conditions of the occupiers of 122 Hermitage Road with regard to visual impact; and secondly, on the character and appearance of the local area.

Reasons

Living conditions

3. The new flank wall would be set back from but still close to the shared boundary between the site and the adjacent property to one side, which is 122 Hermitage Road. While the existing single storey garage abuts the same boundary, the 2-storey element of the proposal would be taller and it would appear more substantive in built form when seen from both the side and rear of this neighbouring property. In views from the side windows of No 122 and the outdoor area just beyond the main rear elevation, the new extension would be noticeably closer than the existing building.
4. From a ground floor window of No 122, which appeared to serve a kitchen or dining room, within which people could be expected to spend a reasonable amount of time, views of the proposed 2-storey flank wall would be direct and at close quarters. An effect of the new addition would also be to further visually confine the outdoor space just beyond the rear door of No 122, which appears to provide to the main access from the house to the back garden.
5. Due to its length, height and position close to the common boundary between Nos 120 and 122, I share the Council's concern that the proposal would be so imposing as to overbear on the occupiers of this adjacent property when viewed from the side and rear of their property.

6. I saw that some properties in the local area have been extended close to the side boundary of their plot and note that the hipped roof form of the existing house would be retained. The occupiers of No 122 also appear to raise no objection. However, my assessment takes into account future as well as the current occupiers of this property.
7. On the first main issue, I conclude that the proposed development would unduly harm the living conditions of the occupiers of No 122. As such, it conflicts with Policy CS21 of the Woking Core Strategy (CS) and the Council's Supplementary Planning Documents, *Woking Design and Outlook, Amenity, Privacy and Daylight* (SPDs) insofar as they aim to safeguard residential amenity.

Character and appearance

8. The appeal property is a semi-detached mainly 2-storey house that faces Hermitage Road in an area of mixed character. It stands towards the end of a line of semi-detached pairs many of which have been externally altered and extended and some pairs differ to others in their age and style. Consequently, there is considerable variety to the existing built form in the local street scene to which the site belongs.
9. The proposal would result in a larger dwelling with an extended front elevation facing the road. The new 2-storey extension would alter the shape, scale and proportions of the host building although the new addition would be modest in width and the distinctive hipped roof would be retained. Elongating the single storey front addition to cover both the main house and the proposed extension would also help visually integrate the new and existing elements. While the proposal would disrupt the broad symmetry between the front façade of No 120 and its attached counterpart as a pair of similar houses, no significant visual disharmony would result. To my mind, the proposal would not appear obtrusive or incongruous among the varied built form with which the finished dwelling would be visually 'read'.
10. The appeal scheme would introduce different roof forms to the front, side and rear that would markedly contrast with the simplicity of the existing hipped roof to the main house and that of the attached dwelling. Nevertheless, the varied roof profile would be split into distinct elements with the mono pitched roof with a flat element at the rear, hipped ends at the side and a mono pitched roof to the single storey front projection. Furthermore, the entire roof of the completed dwelling would not be readily evident from any one direction. Consequently, the proposed roof design would not draw the eye as contrived in its design or awkward in its appearance.
11. The external materials would match those of the existing building and the pattern of openings would be in keeping with the style and appearance of the main house. From what I saw, other nearby properties include far more visible extensions than the proposal without significant detriment to the character and quality of the local street scene. Thus, I am not persuaded that, despite its considerable size, roof design and the altered relationship as a broadly matching pair, the proposal would materially detract from the character or appearance of the local area.
12. On the second main issue, I conclude that the proposed development would not cause serious harm to the character or appearance of the local area.

Accordingly, it does not conflict with CS Policy CS21 or the Council's SPDs, which aim to ensure that development respects and adds to the street scene and the character of the local area. My favourable finding on this issue does not outweigh the significant harm that I have identified in relation to the living conditions of the occupiers of No 122.

Other matters

13. The proposal would provide additional living accommodation that would improve the living conditions of the appellant. It would make efficient use of the land to the side of the property, which is underused. These points weigh in support of the appellant's case, as does the government's desire to allow occupiers more opportunities to improve their homes. On the other hand, the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) seeks to ensure that development secures a high standard of amenity for all users. As the proposal would not do so, the balance of national policy, when the Framework is read as a whole, is firmly tipped against the appeal scheme.
14. The appellant is critical of the Council's handling of the application and has provided an exchange of emails that outline those concerns. However, my remit is solely to determine the appeal.

Conclusion

15. For the reasons set out above, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Gary Deane

INSPECTOR