



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 4 February 2020 by Alex O'Doherty LLB(Hons) MSc

Decision by Sarah Housden BA (Hons) BPI MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 3rd April 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/X0360/D/19/3239730

147 Reading Road, Wokingham RG41 1LJ

- 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 & Mrs P Cox against the decision of Wokingham Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 192136, dated 12 August 2019, was refused by notice dated 12 September 2019.
 - The development proposed is a freestanding double garage to front of property.
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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.

Procedural Matter

3. The appellants referred to a garage at No 209 Reading Road in their written representations, however they have since clarified that the relevant garage referred to is at No 208 Reading Road.

Main Issue

4. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the existing dwelling and the surrounding area, having particular regard to the Reading Road street scene.

Reasons for the Recommendation

5. The appeal site is located on a part of Reading Road where several properties have fairly spacious front drives, with properties well set back from the footway. Apart from low walls and fencing, there is little built form immediately adjacent to the footway. Consequently, a sense of spaciousness prevails.
6. The appeal dwelling has an attractive traditional appearance and modest proportions, with the principal elevation facing the road. The proposed double garage would be sited approximately 0.5 metres from the front boundary, and with a depth of approximately 5 metres, a width of approximately 5.8 metres, and a height of approximately 4 metres, it would be a substantial and unduly large feature that would be out-of-proportion with the scale of the dwelling. It

would also obscure a large portion of the dwelling's front elevation, thereby diminishing its contribution to the street scene. Due to its proximity to the front boundary and position substantially forward of the building line, it would be a prominent and incongruous element in the street scene. The proposal would result in the loss of part of the open area to the front of the appeal dwelling immediately adjacent to the footway, which would be harmful to the spacious character of the street scene. Consequently, the proposal would reduce the contribution that the appeal site makes to the sense of place and well-being in this Green Route location.

7. The proposed garage would be set lower than the footway, and hedge planting has been positioned to screen it. Nevertheless, the hedge planting would take some time to grow to have any noticeable effect and would not screen the building from all angles. As such, the proposed screening would not mitigate the harm that the proposal would cause to the character and appearance of the Reading Road street scene and the surrounding area.
8. The appellants referred to three garages on Reading Road¹. At my site visit, I observed that the garages to the front of Nos 153 and 155 are set back much further behind their respective front boundaries compared with the appeal proposal. I observed that the garage at No 208 is set behind mature trees, which would not be the case at the appeal site. Accordingly, all these examples are not directly comparable with the proposal before me, which has been assessed on its own merits.
9. I therefore conclude that the proposal would have an unacceptable and harmful effect on the character and appearance of the existing dwelling and the surrounding area, having particular regard to the Reading Road street scene. The proposal would conflict with Policies CP1 and CP3 of the Wokingham Borough Core Strategy Development Plan Document (adopted 29 January 2010) which provide that planning permission will be granted for development proposals that maintain or enhance the high quality of the environment and are appropriate to the character of the area. The proposal also conflicts with Policies CC01 and CC03 of the Wokingham Borough Adopted Managing Development Delivery Local Plan document (adopted 21 February 2014) which seek to promote sustainable development and protect and enhance the Borough's Green Infrastructure networks, which include Green Routes.
10. There would be conflict with the advice in the Wokingham Borough Council Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (adopted June 2012) that garages should not be sited in front gardens but should be to the side or rear of a dwelling, and that garages should not project forward of the building line of a property. The proposal conflicts with paragraph 127 c) of the National Planning Policy Framework which provides that decisions should ensure that developments are sympathetic to local character.

¹ Nos 153, 155 and 208 Reading Road.

Conclusion and Recommendation

11. Based on the above, and having regard to all matters raised, I recommend that the appeal should be dismissed.

Alex O'Doherty

APPEAL PLANNING OFFICER

Inspector's Decision

12. I have considered all the submitted evidence and the Appeal Planning Officer's report and on that basis the appeal is dismissed.

Sarah Housden

INSPECTOR