
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 10 March 2020

by Robin Buchanan BA (Hons) MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 6th April 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/L3625/D/19/3243255

42 Pine Walk, Woodmansterne SM7 3PY

- 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 and Mrs K Brindle against the decision of Reigate & Banstead Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 19/01726/HHOLD, dated 2 September 2019, was refused by notice dated 14 November 2019.
 - The development proposed is alterations to existing garage roof structure.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

3. 42 Pine Walk is a two storey semi-detached house within a residential area. It occupies a corner plot with the road at Upper Pines, which is on an incline from its junction with Pine Walk. The existing garage is at the end of the rear garden and the front elevation faces Upper Pines. It is set back slightly behind the side elevation of No 42, parallel with an adjacent pair of semi-detached houses and their single garages.
4. Due to the slope the garage is elevated above the end of the rear garden, at about first floor level of the house. The garage is also a relatively large building of double (car) width and length but has a simple, conventional low pitched gabled roof. While noticeable, it nonetheless echoes the general prevailing sequence of change in building heights in Upper Pines as these houses and garages follow the topography of the slope. Accordingly, it has a somewhat innocuous presence in public views from Upper Pines and Pine Walk.
5. The proposed mansard roof design would slightly reduce eaves height and the upper roof plane would be a similar low pitch to the existing roof. However, the lower roof plane would be at a very steep angle and there would as a result be a significant increase in the ridge height of the garage. The new gables would have a much taller eave to ridge height and so the area of vertical end elevation, as well as built form at a first floor level, would therefore be significantly greater than existing.

6. Consequently, the development would add substantially to the overall scale, massing and bulk of the building. It would cause an abrupt 'step up' in building form that would jar with the current transition and 'step down' in this part of Upper Pines. It would therefore be unduly prominent and dominant in public views, especially looking up from Pine Walk, across the boundary fence and open rear garden of No 42 and looking down from the higher parts of Upper Pines. Furthermore, the mansard roof design, including large areas of glazing at first floor gable level, would unduly emphasise the visual presence of the development. It would be unexpected and incongruous with the prevailing form of buildings in the immediate area, a radical departure from local distinctiveness.
7. The development would therefore cause material harm to the character and appearance of the area, contrary to Policy DES1 and Policy DES2 of the Reigate & Banstead Local Plan Development Management Plan, September 2019. These policies seek to ensure that development respects the character and appearance of its surroundings, promotes and reinforces local distinctiveness and does not disrupt the street scene. These are also objectives of the Council's Householder Extensions & Alterations Supplementary Planning Guidance, March 2004. The development would also conflict with design policies of the National Planning Policy Framework, in particular paragraphs 124, 127(a)(b) and (c) and 130.

Other Matters

8. I note that the garage is not locally or statutorily listed, that the appeal site is not in a conservation area and that the development would not extend forward of the existing building line. However, the absence of harm in these regards is only a neutral factor and does not alter my findings on the main issue above and the harm that the development would have.
9. I also note that a raised planted border would be retained, and I have considered the appellants' suggestion for planning conditions to provide new landscaping and for external materials, including clay tile hanging. However, such matters would not mitigate the harm that would be caused; for example, it would not render the scale, massing and bulk, or design, of the development acceptable.
10. I saw the variation that there is in the height and appearance of nearby houses, including at 50 Upper Pines, and of existing or former garages, including at 2 and 12 Upper Pines (where these flat and monopitch roofs are the exception and anyway relatively small and inconspicuous in public views). Nonetheless, such variation is still manifestly within a legible composition of local design whereas I have found that the development would be a stark contrast. Furthermore, even if the design is 'innovative' I have found it to be inappropriate in this appeal and therefore does not lead me to conclude differently in terms of the harm that I have identified in the main issue above.

Conclusion

11. For the reasons given, the appeal is dismissed.

Robin Buchanan

INSPECTOR