
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 15 July 2020

by **L McKay MA MRTPI**

Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 31 July 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/Q3820/D/19/3242522

Elmside, Horsham Road, Gossops Green, Crawley RH11 8PN

- 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 Mark Hills against the decision of Crawley Borough Council.
 - The application Ref CR/2019/0702/FUL, dated 20 September 2019, was refused by notice dated 14 November 2019.
 - The development proposed is a new garage.
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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. The appeal site is part of a row of detached dwellings of different designs, set in relatively large plots. The dwellings are set well back from the highway with gardens and parking in front, and front boundaries are generally fenced or have tall, mature hedges. Most dwellings have garages to the side, and there are no buildings between the dwellings and the road. Consequently, this part of Horsham Road has a spacious, green character.
4. The proposed garage would be approximately 7 metres wide and 7 metres long and would therefore occupy a considerable proportion of the front garden. Although it would only be marginally taller than the existing front hedge, the depth of the building would mean that a significant amount of it would be seen above the existing gates, even when closed, and considerably more when open. As such, due to its scale, the proposed garage would be a prominent and incongruous feature in this otherwise undeveloped front garden and would erode the spacious character of the area.
5. The use of horizontal timber cladding would be similar in appearance to the existing fence, but would not disguise the depth of the building. A new hedge is proposed which would be consistent with other tall, evergreen hedges in this row, including the existing hedge on site. As such, the planting would not in itself harm the character and appearance of the area. However, while the hedge would screen views of the garage from opposite the site it would not impact on views across or through the gateway. Consequently, it would not be sufficient to mitigate the harmful impact of the proposed garage.

6. Accordingly, the proposal would harm the character and appearance of the area, and would conflict with Policies CH2 and CH3 of the Crawley Borough Local Plan (2015-2030), which require development to be of high quality design and relate sympathetically to their surroundings, and to respond to and reinforce locally distinctive patterns of development.
7. I note that the Council has also cited conflict with guidance in its Urban Design Supplementary Planning Document (2016) (SPD) in its reason for refusal. However, references in the SPD to garages are general provisions relating to dimensions and drainage. The proposal would comply with that guidance. The section that the Council quotes in its officer report relates to extensions rather than detached outbuildings and as such has only broad relevance to the proposal before me. Nevertheless, it highlights the need for developments to relate appropriately to the character of the neighbourhood, which this proposal would not achieve.
8. The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) encourages effective and efficient use of land and optimising the potential of a site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development. However, it makes clear that this must be achieved while safeguarding and improving the environment and further requires that development must add to the overall quality of the area and be sympathetic to local character. As such, the proposal would conflict with the provisions of the Framework.

Other Matters

9. The proposal would not adversely affect the living conditions of neighbouring occupiers and I note that there have been no objections from interested parties, the Council's Arboricultural Officer or the highway authority. However, these are neutral matters which do not weigh in favour of the scheme.
10. The proposal could provide secure car and cycle parking and storage, however the front parking area is behind a substantial gate and there is no substantive evidence before me that storage cannot be provided elsewhere in the site, or that a building of the scale proposed is necessary to make this provision. The planting proposed would be Leylandii hedging, replacing an existing evergreen hedge with another evergreen species. There is no substantive evidence before me that this would provide net gains to biodiversity or add more to the character of the area than the existing hedge. Therefore, I give these matters very limited weight.
11. There would be some economic benefits during construction, however these would be short term and I cannot be certain that they would provide local employment and income, or that local contractors and suppliers would be used, as the appellant contends. Therefore, the economic benefits would be limited. While there would be some benefit from use of sustainable materials, there are few details before me of how this would be achieved, therefore I can afford this very little weight.
12. Overall, the limited benefits of the proposal would not outweigh the harm that the proposed garage would cause to the character and appearance of the area.

Conclusion

13. The appeal is therefore dismissed.

L McKay

INSPECTOR