



Appeal Decision

Site Visit made on 9 February 2021

by R E Jones BSc (Hons), DipTP, MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 23 February 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/X0360/D/20/3262516

310 Nine Mile Ride, Finchampstead RG40 3NN

- 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 A. Terry against the decision of Wokingham Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 201968, dated 11 August 2020, was refused by notice dated 4 September 2020.
 - The development proposed is a detached garage.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

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

Reasons

3. Nine Mile Ride is a lengthy residential street that consists of large dwellings set back from the road and laid out on a fairly consistent building line. The spaces between the dwellings and the road largely comprise driveways, lawns and mature trees and shrubs. These open and verdant frontages are a significant feature of the area's character and have a positive effect on it.
4. The Council's Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document¹ (SPD) is firm in its guidance on garages, which it states, should not be sited in front gardens, and should not project forward of the building line of a property.
5. The proposed garage would be positioned forward of the dwelling's front building line and close to the edge of the highway. In this context, amongst the more open frontages, its massing and height would appear overly prominent and the structure would unduly encroach into the undeveloped space in front of the house. Moreover, its close proximity to the road would be seen to have an abrupt and discordant appearance, that would not be in keeping with the more recessed building line of surrounding dwellings.
6. In spatial terms the proposed garage would not cover a large area in the context of the dwelling's forecourt. Nevertheless, it would have an expansive roof formation that would rise above the eaves line of the dwelling and would appear visually prominent and incongruous when viewed from the street and neighbouring dwellings. I acknowledge that the low-level shrubs, close to the

¹ Wokingham Borough Council, Borough Design Guide, Supplementary Planning Document, June 2012

property's front boundary, would soften the appearance of the proposed garage to some extent. However, I do not consider that the planting would effectively mitigate the harm caused. Even as these shrubs mature there is no certainty, they would entirely screen the garage, or that the planting endures.

7. My attention has been drawn to other garages nearby that are forward of the building line. In the case of the existing garage at No 312 Nine Mile Ride (No 312), to the east, this is set further back from the road, therefore appearing less prominent while being partially screened from the east by a mature hedge. In contrast the appeal proposal would not be afforded the same level of screening.
8. The garage at No 290b Nine Mile Ride (No 290b) has a more relaxed hip to one side which reduces the mass of its roof formation. Moreover, the tall trees that surround it shroud its presence somewhat, making it less prominent from the street. The appeal proposal in contrast has a bulkier roof and would be sited in a more open part of the frontage, thereby increasing its discordance in the street. Accordingly, the garages at Nos 312 and No 290b did not in my view, represent a justified comparison with the appeal proposal.
9. The other examples given were noted during my site visit, but, I do not know the full circumstances of those cases or the policies that applied at the time of their consideration. In any case, my observations, indicated that garages in front of dwellings were generally in the minority, and those that I saw appeared at odds with the area's prevailing pattern of development.
10. There are elements of the proposal's design and use of materials that would be in keeping with the host dwelling, whilst the Council have not raised any concerns in respect of parking and highway safety. Even though these aspects of the scheme are acceptable, they do not overcome my concerns regarding the garage's scale and position in the plot, and the resultant effect of this in the context of the street.
11. Taking the above into account, the proposed garage would cause significant harm to the character and appearance of the surrounding area. It would therefore conflict with Policies CP1 and CP3 of the Core Strategy², Policies CC01, CC02, CC03 and TB21 of the Local Plan³ and the SPD. Collectively, these amongst other matters, require proposals to maintain or enhance the high-quality environment of the area and be appropriate to the area's character in terms of layout and built form. The proposal would also fail to align with the guidance in paragraph 127 of the National Planning Policy Framework, where it requires proposals to be sympathetic to the surrounding built environment and landscape setting.

Conclusion

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

RE Jones

INSPECTOR

² Wokingham Borough Local Development Framework, Adopted Core Strategy Development Plan Document, January 2010.

³ Wokingham Borough Development Plan, Adopted Managing Development Delivery Local Plan, February 2014.