



Appeal Decision

Site Visit made on 9 February 2021

by Scott Britnell MSc FdA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 3 March 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/X0360/D/20/3260582

Dodwell, Soldiers Rise, Finchampstead RG40 3NE

- 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 Christopher Blow against the decision of Wokingham Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 201891, dated 29 July 2020, was refused by notice dated 1 September 2020.
 - The development proposed is described as 'householder application for the proposed erection of a single storey detached garage'
-

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The description of development in the banner header above has been taken from the application form. The appellant advises that the description was changed on the request of the Council and suggests that I consider the site for the proposed structure as a driveway and not a garden. I have assessed the proposal on the basis of the details before me and my own observations.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

4. Soldiers Rise is a narrow residential road with the dwellings on the east side set in a strong linear form of development behind sizable front gardens, some in part given over to driveways and parking provision. While the scale and style of dwellings is mixed, there is a general absence of buildings in front of the building line. Collectively, these elements contribute to an open and verdant streetscene. On the western side of Soldiers Rise, towards the southern end nearing Lower Wokingham Road, there is greater diversity in the building line and plot size.
5. The proposed garage would sit close to the front boundary of the appeal site. The line of trees along the north boundary of the appeal site would screen the proposed garage on approach from the north. However, there is no evidence before me to indicate that the appellant has any control over these trees or that they would be retained. Even if they were to be retained, the proposed garage would be highly visible from the public realm in the immediate vicinity of the appeal site and the neighbouring garden to the south. The existing

- vegetation along the front boundary would also be insufficient to afford significant screening of the proposal.
6. Given the residential nature of Soldiers Rise the proposed garage would not have an urbanising effect on the area. However, the drawings indicate that it would have a maximum height of 3.6 metres and a footprint in excess of 32 square metres, so it would be a substantial building. As a result of its size and position close to the front boundary of the site it would appear as an overly dominant feature relative to the prevailing openness in this particular location. Thus, the proposal would appear as a discordant and incongruous addition to the streetscene, intruding upon its sense of openness and causing harm to the character and appearance of the area.
 7. I conclude that the proposal would cause harm to the character and appearance of the area. There would be conflict with Policies CP1 and CP3 of the Wokingham Borough Local Development Framework Adopted Core Strategy Development Plan Document January 2010. These seek, among other things, to ensure that developments maintain or enhance the high quality of the environment and contribute to a sense of place in the buildings and spaces themselves and in the way they integrate with their surroundings. There would also be conflict Paragraph 127 of the National Planning Policy Framework which states that planning decisions should ensure that developments, amongst other things, add to the overall quality of the area and maintain a strong sense of place.
 8. The proposal would also conflict with Section 4 of the Wokingham Borough Council Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document June 2012 (SPD), which states that garages should not be sited in front gardens nor project forward of the building line of a property. The appellant argues that the guidance contained within the SPD cannot be applied across an entire borough. Insofar as each proposal must be considered on its merits, I agree with the appellant's argument. Notwithstanding this, the purpose of the SPD is to provide guidance as to how development may be brought forward so as to avoid harmful effects, which I have identified above would nevertheless arise.
 9. Although part of Hansom Cabin and the garage at Hillsboro adjoin Soldiers Rise, these features are to the rear of the dwellings which front Lower Wokingham Road. As such, they do not contribute to the character and appearance of Soldiers Rise in the same way that the appeal site does. Thus, despite their proximity to the appeal site, they are viewed in a different context than the proposed garage.
 10. The garages at the dwellings By the Stream and Kallithea are set further back within their plots and are much closer to the main dwellings than the proposed garage would be. Further, the fencing along the front boundary at Little Oaks is of a different scale and form of development to the appeal proposal. As such, these developments are not directly comparable to the proposal before me. In addition, the garages on Lower Wokingham Road while close to the front boundary of properties are located away from the appeal site and are seen in a different context.
 11. The appellant also suggests that the proposal would provide an opportunity to re-work the layout of the driveway and improve highway safety for vehicles exiting the site. There is no evidence before me to indicate that the current

layout is likely to reduce highway safety in the area or that any improvements, if necessary, could not be achieved without the proposed development.

12. Although I have had regard to the above matters they do not provide compelling justification for the appeal proposal. My findings therefore remain unchanged.

Conclusion

13. For the reasons given above I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Scott Britnell

INSPECTOR