



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 13 December 2021

by Robin Buchanan BA (Hons) MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 13th January 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/X0360/D/21/3282817

**The Hansom Cab Inn, Lower Wokingham Road, Finchampstead,
Wokingham RG40 3NG**

- 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 Nikki Bull against the decision of Wokingham Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 211506, dated 21 April 2021, was refused by notice dated 27 July 2021.
 - The development proposed is described as a detached garage to be converted into a residential annexe by insulating the existing structure, adding a rear extension and raising the roof height to allow an extra floor to be added.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the host property and the area.

Reasons

3. The host property is a chalet bungalow at one end of a row of three detached bungalows. These have low eave heights, a mainly hipped roof form and are set well back from Lower Wokingham Road in a semi-rural setting. The other two bungalows have no outbuildings to the front. The garage is forward of the host property next to the road and on the brow of a hill in part of a more open pocket of land with fewer trees. Its low eaves, square floorplan and shallow pitched pyramid roof means that it is subservient to the host property, maintains spaciousness on this part of the appeal site and is innocuous in public views from the road and a pavement in both directions. The absence of any significant built-form along this part of the roadside is locally distinctive.
4. The proposal would alter the floorplan of the building from square to rectangular and increase its length, next to part of the host property and facing the road, by about two-thirds. It would also be closer to the road at one corner. In addition, it would fundamentally change the roof design with two large vertical gables at either end of an extruded ridge line in place of sloping hipped roofs. Consequently, despite a modest uplift in eave and ridge heights, it would nonetheless result in a substantial increase in the overall scale and massing of built form, particularly at the higher first floor level. This would significantly reduce openness and give a notably more cramped arrangement of development in close proximity to the host property and the front boundary.

On one side, combined with the higher eaves level, it would appreciably undermine the primacy of the host property. On the other side the overall size, form and bulk of the building would be unduly prominent and conspicuous as seen from the lower incline of the road and pavement in both directions. It would also detract from the appearance of this verdant tree-lined road corridor.

5. The building would otherwise broadly be in-keeping with the appearance of the host property, which includes a large front roof gable, and suitable external materials could be approved by a condition. The proposal would leave a satisfactory garden space, not result in tree removal and have no adverse effect on the living conditions of the occupiers of nearby dwellings. However, the absence of harm in these respects would not overcome the adverse impacts referred to above.
6. The additional tree planting at the appeal site would likely take many years to screen the increased size of the building. It would not, therefore, alleviate the adverse impacts meantime. In any event the absence of greater public visibility, or any neighbour objection, does not overcome the intrinsic incompatibility of the proposal in relation to the host property or to the prevailing siting and layout of development in this row of bungalows.
7. The dwelling nearby at Pinehill also faces the road but it is within a more densely treed area, visually and spatially separate from the appeal site. While there is a large outbuilding near the boundary of its plot, close to the road, it is sited lower down the hill with a narrow gable end facing the road. As a result, it is not readily apparent in the streetscene and the circumstances of that outbuilding are not therefore comparable.
8. Taking all of the above into account, I find that the proposal would cause unacceptable harm to the character and appearance of the host property and the area. Accordingly, it would not comply with the Council's Core Strategy¹ Policies CP1 and CP3 or with its Managing Development Delivery² Policy CC03. These policies include that development should maintain a high quality environment. It should also be appropriate in scale, mass, layout, built-form and height and in relation to the character of the area, including buildings, spaces and landscape features. In these regards, it would also not comply with the Council's Borough Design Guide³.
9. It would also conflict with the National Planning Policy Framework which seeks to achieve well-designed places. Development should add to the overall quality of an area, be visually attractive in layout, sympathetic to local character, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, and maintain a strong sense of place.

Conclusion

10. For the reasons given above I therefore conclude that the appeal should not succeed.

Robin Buchanan

INSPECTOR

¹ Wokingham Borough Local Development Framework Core Strategy Development Plan Document, January 2010

² Wokingham Borough Development Plan Managing Development Delivery Local Plan, February 2014

³ Wokingham Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document, June 2012