The Planning Inspectorate

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 12 April 2022

by L Page BSc (Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 05 May 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/D3640/D/21/3288155
66 Mount Pleasant Close, Lightwater GU18 5TR

- 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 McDonough against the decision of Surrey Heath Borough Council.
- The application Ref 21/0808/FFU, dated 19 July 2021, was refused by notice dated 9 September 2021.
- The development proposed is construction of flat areas on the front drive to house three new detached storage units for bikes and bins.

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 area.

Reasons

3. The site is located at 66 Mount Pleasant Close, comprising part of the front garden area, which is fully laid to block paving for parking purposes. There is a mature hedgerow directly adjacent which helps screen the site to some degree but in general terms it remains open to the street where the site is in close proximity to the highway and forward of the prevailing building lines. Other dwellings along the street have similar front garden areas, with mature soft landscape features, which also helps screen the site from a distance, something observed during my site visit. However, glimpses of the site remain, and clear views are attainable when in close proximity. Apart from an isolated example elsewhere in the area, storage structures are not established features of the street scene.

4. The proposal would involve the construction of three units for the purposes of refuse and cycle storage and associated platform, with a mix of timber and steel appearance. I appreciate the appellant's position that the design of the proposal is well thought out and the scale and views of the proposal would be limited. However, the Residential Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document 2017 is clear that refuse storage areas should be located to the rear or side of dwellings where they are invisible in the public realm and that bin stores in front of dwellings, even when well screened, have a poor negative visual impact on the street. Furthermore, similar guidance is applicable to cycle storage, which should not have a detrimental impact on the street scene.

5. Overall, the proposal would introduce structures forward of the prevailing building line and this would be noticeable and at odds with the street scene to the extent it would harm the character and appearance of the area. Consequently, the proposal would conflict with Policy DM9 of the Surrey Heath Core Strategy and Development Management Policies Development Plan Document 2012, Principles 9.2 and 7.1 of the Residential Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document 2017 and Design Principle B1 of the Lightwater Village Design Statement Supplementary Planning Document 2007.

Other Matters

6. Whilst I acknowledge the appellants' position that the proposal would provide accessibility benefits, given the existence of a side access to the rear it is not clear why the location of the proposal is preferable. Similarly, it is not clear why additional storage, to free up storage within the dwelling, could not be accommodated to the rear.

7. For example, looking at the block plan and without a topographical plan, it is not clear that the rear garden is unable to accommodate the additional storage, or that the dimensions of the side access or a location other than the front garden would cause disadvantage.

8. Furthermore, even if the rear garden area has sloping topography it is not clear why a platform could not be created in a similar manner to what is being proposed in the front garden.

9. Additionally, there is no evidence that the proposal would act as a deterrent for crime. An absence of an objection from the parish council, in and of itself, is not indicative of the proposal's acceptability. Consequently, and altogether, these matters have not been determinative under the appeal.

Conclusion

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

Liam Page

INSPECTOR