The Planning Inspectorate

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 6 July 2022

by Hannah Guest BSc (Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 29th July 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/Y3615/D/22/3295718
27 Old Palace Road, Guildford GU2 7TU

- 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 Nadeem Ahmad against the decision of Guildford Borough Council.
- The application Ref 21/P/01555, dated 14 July 2021, was refused by notice dated 28 January 2022.
- The development proposed is conversion of garage door to window, single storey rear fill-in extension and first-floor side extension with roof alterations for loft conversion.

Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for conversion of garage door to window, single storey rear fill-in extension and first-floor side extension with roof alterations for loft conversion at 27 Old Palace Road, Guildford GU2 7TU in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref 21/P/01555, dated 14 July 2021, subject to the following conditions:

    1) The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than 3 years from the date of this decision.

    2) The materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of the development hereby permitted shall match those used in the existing dwelling.

    3) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: OPR27/01; OPR27/02; OPR27/03; OPR27/04; OPR27/05; OPR27/06; Blocks Plans.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the street scene and surrounding area.

Reasons

3. Old Palace Road is a wide road, consisting predominantly of 2 storey semi-detached houses set back from the street on fairly large plots. The width of the road, and moderate scale and set back of the properties provides a sense of spaciousness.

4. Every house is set back a similar distance, which forms a strong and consistent front building line. Most of the front gardens include an element of hardstanding for parking as well as shrubs and flowers. Hedges are also a common front boundary treatment. Together, this creates an open and green character.

5. The houses on the south side of Old Palace Road, which include the appeal property, have a more consistent appearance than those on the north side. Although there are slight variations in their scale and form, they have similar materials and features, including 2-storey bay windows, which create a rhythm along the street and a degree of uniformity. It is the group of houses on the south side of Old Palace Road, particularly those between Scillonian Road and Iveagh Road, which the appeal property contributes to.

6. There are regular, albeit variable, gaps between the houses along the road. Some of the gaps close to the appeal property are comparatively narrow. The gaps are a feature of the street that add to its uniformity and rhythm. However, the size of the gaps is less important than their regularity. I saw that the open and green character is more a result of the width of the street and set back of the properties as described above.

7. Several of the houses along the road have been extended to the side, which has resulted in some wider frontages, smaller gaps between properties and differing roof profiles. However, this has had a relatively limited and neutral effect on the character and appearance of the street scene.

8. The proposed extension, as viewed from the street, would be of a modest scale and stepped back at first floor level. Given this, it would not be visually dominant and would appear as a subservient addition. Furthermore, its simple design and matching materials would respect the existing dwelling. While the form of the main roof would change, the hipped form added by the roof of the extension would be in keeping with the character of the street.

9. I accept that the proposal would result in the loss of some of the gap between the host property and its neighbour at first floor level. I also acknowledge that the Council's Extensions and Alterations Supplementary Planning Document 2018 (SPD), whilst guidance, seeks to avoid a terracing effect where that would detrimentally affect local character, recommending a separation between properties of one metre or more.

10. Although the proposal in this instance would extend to within 1 metre of the neighbouring property, that would only be fractionally so. As I have set out above the characteristic spaciousness of the area only derives in small part from gaps between properties, which are variable rather than uniform. In that context, and as the proposal would be set back from the principal elevation, it would have little meaningful effect on openness and would not create an adverse terracing effect. Moreover, I saw, notwithstanding the guidance in the SPD, that side extensions of varying forms have over time become somewhat characteristic of the area.

11. The appeal property and its attached neighbour are quite similar in form. Both have single storey garage extensions to the side. The proposal would unbalance the pair and it may be that in isolation this would cause some harm. However, there are already a few unbalanced pairs along the road and on neighbouring streets, therefore, given it is characteristic of the area, the overall effect of the proposal is limited. The effect is also further reduced by the tall hedge that forms part of the front boundary treatment of the appeal property, which restricts, to a degree, views of the pair as a whole. Given the area is characterised by good sized plots, mature gardens and established landscaping, in my view such features are highly likely to remain in a similar form for aesthetics, privacy and consistency with local character.

12. Accordingly, for the reasons above, I find the proposal would integrate appropriately with the character and appearance of the street scene and surrounding area. As such it would be in accordance with the relevant provisions of policy D1 of the Guildford Borough Local Plan: Strategy and Sites 2019 and policies G1, G5 and H8 of the Guildford Borough Local Plan 2003 that, in summary, seek to protect the character and appearance of the area.

Conditions

13. In addition to the standard time limit condition, a plans condition is required in the interests of certainty. In order to protect the character and appearance of the street scene and area, a condition is necessary to specify that the external materials used in the construction of the extension should match the existing dwelling.

Conclusion

14. For the reasons above, having taken account of the development plan as a whole along with all other relevant material considerations, I conclude that the appeal should be allowed subject to the conditions set out above.

Hannah Guest

INSPECTOR