



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 22 August 2022

by Robin Buchanan BA (Hons) MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 22nd September 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/M2270/D/22/3295208

Trenches Farm House, Knowle Road, Brenchley TN12 7DJ

- 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 Ms Jackie Matthias against the decision of Tunbridge Wells Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 21/02324/FULL, dated 30 June 2021, was refused by notice dated 1 March 2022.
 - The development proposed is an extension to an existing garage and roof to provide ancillary accommodation/office space.
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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 existing garage and the area, including the street scene.

Reasons

3. The existing detached double garage (the garage) is sited in front, and to one side, of Trenches Farm House, which is a large, detached dwelling (the house). These buildings are located next to Knowle Road, near the junction with Knowle Lane. They are part of a small cluster of residential and commercial development along a short stretch of this road in an otherwise remote countryside location. While the garage is diminutive in scale and massing compared to the house, including modest eaves and ridge levels, it shares similar external materials (brick and tile) and some important design details, including a pitched gable roof (double pile) with black timber framing and white render panels and some fenestration. The garage and the house, and this pair of buildings together, are locally distinctive.
4. The extension would enlarge the garage to one side and upwards to provide an additional parking bay and ancillary living accommodation in a first floor. The ground level would repeat the layout and floorplan of one half of the garage. In this respect it would be acceptable in siting and layout, including in relation to the house and maintain a building line with Knowle Road. However, in contrast to what exists, the absence of windows or pedestrian door in the extended part would result in unduly bland and overbearing brick elevations on three sides of the building, each with an aspect towards Knowle Road.
5. The new eave and ridge levels would in themselves be relatively modest increases in the height of the building. A narrow band of white render with a

black timber fascia board in the side elevations would be in keeping with materials in the garage roof, the proposed roof and in the house. However, this detail would have only a limited effect in breaking up the expanse of vertical built form. The increased eave level would still have a profound adverse effect on the extent of wall, which would be significantly increased in height across the full depth of the building, relative to the extent of roof above which would be significantly decreased in height. This would, as a result, create awkward and unusually proportioned side elevations.

6. The flat form of the proposed crown roof would fundamentally be at odds with the pitched form of the existing roof. It would also cover most of the central, upper level of the building leaving a series of small projecting gables front and rear. While these roofs would be at the same pitch as the existing gables with similar black timber framing and white render infill panels, this part of the roof would no longer maintain the same extent and depth of valleys between the pitched gable roof slopes. While the intervening infill sloping roofs facing front and back would recede away from the outside edges of the building, these would nonetheless be visible in short distance angled and perpendicular views from Knowle Road, erode gaps and space at roof level and add appreciably to the bulk of the building.
7. The notion of a triple pile roof form over the extended garage would not be inappropriate per se, including that it would match the form of part of the roof of the house. However, the raised valley between the side roof slope of each projecting gable would amalgamate this upper part of the front and rear elevation into a single continuous façade. This would manifestly undermine the significance and appreciation of the existing individually larger discrete gables. As such, the proposal would mimic these intrinsic features of the garage (and the house) in an unconvincing and inappropriate manner and add appreciably to the bulk of the building.
8. Whether looking down or up along the slope of Knowle Road, including as seen in relation to the house and the large converted oast houses on the same side of the road, the existing garage is assimilated inconspicuously into this streetscene as a complementary, subservient adjunct in keeping with the house. Also, as it is viewed from nearby Knowle Lane and a public footpath that runs to the south east of the appeal site. While the proposed building would not be disproportionate in size to the house and remain an ancillary outbuilding, it would nonetheless deviate significantly from important design details and features of the garage and the house. In addition, the ground and first floor parts of the proposal, including the upward extension and roof, would cumulatively result in a building that was plainly of increased scale and massing and, in particular, markedly different in overall bulk, form and appearance to the existing garage.
9. Accordingly, despite the front garden boundary wall and railings, the proposal would unduly increase the prominence and presence of the resulting building next to Knowle Road, especially in its upper most visible part. Though not in an area of countryside subject to any special landscape or other rural designation, the Council has designated Knowle Road and Knowle Lane as 'rural lanes' having regard to, amongst other things, their local landscape and visual amenity value. While Knowle Lane is quite short, the development would remain largely out of most views from this lane, behind the house. However,

while Knowle Road is quite long, the proposal would have an unacceptable localised impact along this particular part of it.

10. Taking all of the above into account, I find that the proposed development would cause harm to the character and appearance of the existing garage and the area, including the street scene. Consequently, it would not fully comply with Policies EN1, EN25 and H11 of the Tunbridge Wells Borough Local Plan, March 2006 or Core Policies 4 and 14 of the Tunbridge Wells Borough Core Strategy, June 2010. These policies seek to conserve local character and distinctive sense of place and protect the countryside for its own sake. Development in the countryside for additional ancillary buildings (albeit in this case by extension) should not result in a poorly-proportioned building or detract from its character or setting and have no significant adverse impact on the form or appearance of the building. It should also respect the context of the site having regard to scale, external appearance and roofscape and not result in unsympathetic change to the character of a defined rural lane.
11. In these respects the proposal would also be at odds with related objectives of the Council set out in its Rural Lanes supplementary planning guidance (January 1998) to maintain the special quality and nature of rural lanes from unsympathetic development, including in terms of design and factors or features which detract from the character of the rural lanes. It would also be at odds with some design aims of the Council for extending garage outbuildings set out in its Alterations & Extensions supplementary planning document (June 2006).
12. It would conflict with objectives of the Framework to ensure well-designed places with development that adds to the overall quality of an area, is visually attractive as a result of good architecture and is sympathetic to local character, including the surrounding built environment. It should also maintain a strong sense of place using building types to create distinctive places to live and visit and recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside (paragraphs 130 a), b), c) and d) and 174 b)).

Other Matters

13. I have considered whether the development could be made acceptable by the use of conditions or planning obligations, including the conditions suggested by both main parties. However, and having regard to the relevant tests set out in the Framework and Planning Practice Guidance, I am not aware of any such provision that would overcome the fundamental harm that I have identified in the main issue above.

Planning Balance and Conclusion

14. The proposal would not accord with the development plan overall. There are no other material considerations, including the provisions of the Framework, which outweigh this finding. Consequently, for the reasons given above I conclude that the appeal does not succeed.

Robin Buchanan

INSPECTOR