

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 23 August 2022

by Martin Andrews MA(Planning) BSc(Econ) DipTP & DipTP(Dist) MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 07 November 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/L2250/D/22/3301876

Dunrovin, Main Road, Sellindge, Ashford TN25 6EG

- 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 Michael Port against the decision of Folkestone & Hythe District Council.
 - The application, Ref. 22/0212/FH, dated 4 February 2022, was refused by notice dated 1 April 2022.
 - The development proposed is single storey garage / outbuilding to front onto existing concrete base.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposed garage / outbuilding on the character and appearance of the street scene of Main Road

Reasons

3. The appeal proposal is to add a single storey timber framed garage / outbuilding on existing concrete hardstanding to the front of the host dwelling. The hardstanding would also be extended to provide vehicular access and manoeuvring. As such, this would be a development well forward of the established building line set back from the front boundaries of the properties on this side of Main Road between Springfield House and Robrae, the next door but one property to the west. As the officer's report explains, this is a section of the road with five bungalows set back in their plots and mature front boundary planting, only interrupted by the driveways.
 4. Given this character and appearance of the street scene defined in large part by the recessed building line, I consider that a new building with the substantial footprint and forward position proposed would be a scheme of inherently poor design. A garage is an ancillary building to a host dwelling and should therefore be perceived as subservient, whereas in this case the combination of size and siting would have the potential to give it undue prominence and draw the eye of passers-by.
 5. In this regard, the Council has drawn attention to the provisions of Policy HB8 of the Folkestone & Hythe Places and Policies Local Plan 2020 ('the Local Plan'). The proposed development, although separate from the bungalow, can
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reasonably be regarded as an 'extension' for the purposes of the policy. And the development would be in clear contravention of proviso 5 which seeks to maintain the visual quality of the street or road. In particular, this includes a requirement for extensions to respect the prevailing building line and maintain the open character of the plot where this is a feature of the street scene.

6. For the appellant it is argued that in common with neighbouring properties there is substantial planting to the front, in this case an established hedgerow in front of a wooden fence. I acknowledge that for the most part this would screen the building, albeit with the possibility of an exception in some views close to the site entrance.
7. However, as a matter of principle, whilst landscaping as an integral part of a development proposal can soften its impact, it should not be relied on to hide development of poor design as is the case here. And whilst a condition could be imposed for the retention of the vegetative screening, it would be difficult to effectively enforce in the longer term given variables including potential disease and dying of the trees; the burden of its ongoing maintenance, and the differing preferences of future owners.
8. As regards the last two points there is a possibility of the appeal scheme setting a precedent. It is by no means uncommon for walls and railings to be favoured by owners over planting for their ease of maintenance and increased security. If a building close to the front boundary is allowed in this application, it would be more difficult to reasonably resist subsequent proposals for this type of enclosure. The effect of this, and indeed the garage itself if planting were to become less effective, would be a harmful change in the rural character and appearance of Main Road to one of a more suburban nature.
9. I acknowledge the argument in the grounds of appeal that the existing garage attached to the bungalow is outdated and unable to satisfactorily accommodate a modern vehicle. However, I am not persuaded that this drawback is sufficient to justify the remedy sought in the appeal application.
10. I have had regard to all other matters raised, including the support of the Parish Council, but nothing I have seen or read alters my conclusion that the proposal would have an unacceptably adverse effect on the character and appearance of the street scene of Main Road. This would be in harmful conflict with Local Plan Policies HB1 and HB8 and with Section 12: 'Achieving Well Designed Places' of the National planning Policy Framework 2021.
11. For these reasons the appeal is dismissed.

Martin Andrews

INSPECTOR