

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 2 November 2022

by D Cramond BSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 5th December 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/K3605/D/22/3304586

1 Courtleas, Cobham, Surrey KT11 2PW

- 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 Gary White against the decision of Elmbridge Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 2021/4423, dated 29 December 2021, was refused by notice dated 20 June 2022.
 - The development proposed is extensions and alterations to convert existing single-storey house into two storey house, single-storey rear extension, front porch, front/rear dormer windows and rear dormer windows to existing detached garage following partial demolition of existing house.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matter

2. I use the Council's description of development which is more precise than the application form; I note that the Appellant also uses this on the appeal form.

Main Issues

3. The main issues are the effect of the proposal on i) the character and appearance of the host property and the locality and ii) living conditions for neighbours.

Reasons

4. The appeal property is a bungalow with modest proportions and unremarkable elevations. It is a low-key structure and reflects others found locally including the adjoining property No 2 Courtleas. The ground slopes down the road towards this neighbour and beyond albeit the appeal property has had greater excavation and so ridge heights match. More prominent is the appeal dwelling's garage block which is on higher ground and visually bulky in its own right. On the other side of the road is the very substantial 'Tudor Court' although its potential dominance is tempered by siting and significant vegetation. In all, the buildings, gardens and topography come together to form an area of established residential character and pleasing appearance.

Character and appearance

5. Within an established area one might expect ridge heights to reflect to some degree the topography of the land and to this end, and given immediate
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surrounds, it might not be unreasonable to consider increasing the height and bulk of the appeal property. Similarly, the nature of favoured external appearance can change over time and from my perspective a re-modelling of the appeal property would not necessarily be out of order and at the end of this road, even given prominence, one need not be too precious emulating the style of the prevailing bungalows running down Courtleas.

6. However, regrettably, to my mind there has been over-ambition in terms of scale with this proposal and the inappropriate design route which has been followed would be patently mis-guided if allowed to be built. Put simply this home would look too large and out of place. I appreciate the step-down towards No 2 but the overall undue massing of the planned dominant building would be further emphasised by the bulk and ridge height of the roof with its internal accommodation, the large front facing gable, multiple sizeable dormers, and an elevational finish in stand-out mock Tudor fashion. Furthermore, the sizeable garage up the hill is already a significant structure, not adding positively to the scene, and the dormers as proposed would make this, supposedly ancillary building, jarring on the eye.
7. Taken as a whole the appeal proposal would represent overly prominent and excessive built development of an unsuitable design relative to its adjacent building and given the character of the area and these attractive environs.
8. Policy DM2 of the Elmbridge Local Plan Development Management Plan 2015 (LP) and Policies CS10 and CS17 of the Elmbridge Core Strategy 2011 (CS) are relevant. Taken together and amongst other matters, they seek to ensure that new development embodies high quality design, reflects local character, protects the streetscene, and exemplifies local distinctiveness. For the reasons given above I conclude that there would be conflict with these policies. The policies have objectives that are also reflected in the Design and Character SPD, the Companion Guide: Home Extensions (SPD). In my opinion the scheme would run contrary to its main aesthetic aims albeit this publication cannot be expected to cover every eventuality.

Living conditions

9. No 2 Courtleas would find itself alongside a large bulky dwelling with three floors of accommodation and associated windows, significant projection beyond the existing rear building line, and all on higher ground level. The result from the immediate or wider rear garden area of No 2 would be an overly-proximate edifice which would give a very uncomfortable feeling of undue dominance as well as unreasonable loss of privacy and sense of overlooking. Even with the reduction in massing towards the shared side boundary this development would have an overbearing impact.
10. LP Policy DM2 also seeks to ensure that development does not have any undue adverse impact on adjoining properties. I conclude that this scheme would conflict with this and it would also run contrary to the parallel objectives within the SPD.

Other matters

11. I understand the wish to extend and re-model this dwelling. I appreciate the planning history on this site and I have carefully considered the previous appeal decision (ref APP/K3605/A/00/1047086). I would not disagree with the reasoning or thrust of that decision or the character appraisal but the fact

remains that the scheme before is of greater scale and different design, as well as being within a more recent policy context. I am at one with the previous Inspector in that I am not suggesting that there should be an embargo on any change to the current dwelling. However, any such change should be appropriate to the circumstances and I am assessing the current scheme on its own merits and I find, for the reasons above, that the presently planned development would be unacceptable.

12. I have carefully considered all the points raised by the Appellant but these matters do not outweigh the concerns which I have in relation to the main issues identified above.

13. The National Planning Policy Framework has been considered and the development plan policies which I cite mirror relevant objectives within that document.

Overall conclusion

14. For the reasons given above I conclude that the appeal proposal would have unacceptable adverse effects on the character and appearance of the host property and the locality as well as on living conditions for neighbours. Accordingly, the appeal is dismissed.

D Cramond

INSPECTOR