



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 4 May 2023

by G Roberts BA (Hons) MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 18 May 2023.

Appeal Ref: APP/D3640/D/23/3316252

140 Guildford Road, Lightwater, Surrey, GU18 5RW

- 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 Panaich against the decision of Surrey Heath Borough Council.
 - The application Ref. 22/1158/FFU, dated 9 November 2022, was refused by notice dated 3 January 2023.
 - The development proposed is conversion of garage into habitable accommodation with alterations to the front façade, construction of single storey side/rear extension, internal alterations and associated works.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for conversion of garage into habitable accommodation with alterations to the front façade, construction of single storey side/rear extension, internal alterations and associated works at 140 Guildford Road, Lightwater, Surrey, GU18 5RW in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref. 22/1158/FFU, dated 9 November 2022 and the plans submitted with it and subject to the conditions listed below.
 - 1) The development hereby permitted shall begin before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.
 - 2) The materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of the development hereby permitted shall be as specified in the application form.
 - 3) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: 01; 02; 03 Rev.B.
 - 4) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in full accordance with the recommendations of the Arboricultural Report & Arboricultural Impact Assessment prepared by JCA Ltd and dated 4 October 2022.

Preliminary Matter

2. I have adopted the description of development as set out in the decision notice as this provides a more accurate summary of the proposal.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the host property and surrounding area.

Reasons

4. The appeal site is located on the northern side of Guildford Road and forms part of a small estate of similar two storey detached properties that are set back from the road and are served by an estate road that runs parallel to Guildford Road. There is a single point of access to the estate road from Guildford Road with the properties separated from the latter by not only the estate road but also by a wide grass verge which contains mature vegetation and trees. The latter effectively screens most of the properties from Guildford Road, including the appeal site. A number of the properties on the estate have been altered or extended, with examples of single storey and two storey side extensions as well as rear extensions.
5. The appeal proposal involves converting the existing single storey garage, on the western side of the host property, into habitable accommodation and replacing the existing garage door with a 'bay' window. Also, extending the existing utility room, that sits behind the garage and incorporating this within a new single storey rear extension. The Council do not object to the loss of the garage or to the introduction of the new 'bay' window given that the latter replicates the design of the existing 'bay' windows on the ground floor to the host. I concur with the Council's findings in this respect. Whilst the Parish Council have objected to the loss of the garage, as I observed on site the whole of the frontage to the appeal site is set aside for parking, with the ability to accommodate up to three vehicles. I am satisfied that this level of off-site parking provision is more than sufficient to serve the host property.
6. The Council do contend that the proposed side/rear extension would be bulky and over dominant, harming the host property and surrounding area. I do not agree. The side element of the new extension is located at the rear of the existing utility room and would link with the proposed rear extension to provide a large kitchen/living/dining area, designed in part with a flat roof and partly with a hipped roof incorporating a glazed atrium along its ridge. As such, the proposed side/rear extension would be completely hidden behind the converted garage and would not be visible from Guildford Road. It would, therefore, not be visible from any public vantage points given that the rear garden to the host is enclosed on both sides by the rear gardens of its neighbours, and as its rear boundary, which abuts the A322, comprises mature trees and vegetation that completely screen the garden from the A322. Consequently, the proposal would not have any harmful impact on the streetscene.
7. Whilst the proposed extensions would be visible, in part, from neighbouring properties, those views would simply be of a single storey extension that you would commonly expect to see in such locations. Whilst I accept that the proposed extension is large, I am entirely satisfied that its scale, size and design is acceptable and would not represent a dominant or overly bulky addition to the host property. The proposed extension would be set back from the side boundary to 140A Guildford Road (No.140A) (to the west) and would be cut back to follow the irregular common boundary with that property. It would also be set back from the boundary to 138A Guildford Road (No.138A) (to the east) and would project marginally beyond the back wall of the single storey gabled extension to No.138A. Combined with the proposed part flat roof and part low hipped/glazed roof design, the proposal would not, in my view, be out of keeping or unsympathetic to the host property.

8. I accept that the proposal would result in a change to the appearance of the rear of the host property. However, I disagree with the Council and consider that the proposal would be proportionate, subservient and sympathetic to the host and would sit comfortably on this part of the appeal site.
9. In relation to the Residential Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (September 2017) (RDG), for the above reasons, the proposal: would not erode the character of the streetscene; would be subservient, sympathetic and proportional to the host: and would not erode neighbours amenities. Whilst I note the objection from No.140A, based on my observations on site I am satisfied that the proposal would not result in any harm to their living conditions, a finding that is supported by the Council who have not raised this as an issue. In view of this, the appeal proposal would comply with Principles 10.3 and 10.4 to the RDG.
10. Turning to the Lightwater Village Design Statement Supplementary Planning Document (October 2007) (LVS), for similar reasons, the proposal: would not result in any harm to the character of the area or result in an overdevelopment of the site; and would be sympathetic to the scale, balance, style and character of the host and its neighbours. As to the issue of overdevelopment, the rear garden to the host is extensive and of more than sufficient size to accommodate the proposal. In view of this, the appeal proposal would also comply with Principles B2 and B3 to the LVS.
11. Accordingly, I find that the appeal proposal would comply with policy DM9 of the Surrey Heath Core Strategy & Development Management Policies 2011 – 2028 (February 2012), Principles 10.3 and 10.4 of the RDG, Principles B2 and B3 of the LVS and paragraph 130 of the National Planning Policy Framework (July 2021). The latter and policy DM9 seek, amongst other requirements, to ensure that new development is of a high quality, respects and enhances local character and is appropriate in terms of its scale, bulk and appearance.

Conditions

12. The Council has suggested conditions which I have considered against the advice in the Framework and the Planning Practice Guidance chapter on the use of planning conditions. Conditions requiring compliance with the approved plans, for materials to be as specified in the application form and for the development to be carried out in accord with the recommendations of the Arboricultural Report are necessary and reasonable to secure a high-quality development and to protect the health of existing trees. I have, however, amended some of the suggested wording to reflect the submitted details and to provide clarity.

Conclusion

13. For the reasons given above and having taken all the matters raised into account I conclude that the appeal should be allowed.

G Roberts

INSPECTOR