



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: 8th June 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/D3640/D/23/3318473

40 Guildford Road, West End, Woking, Surrey, GU24 9PW

- 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 K Piper against the decision of Surrey Heath Borough Council.
 - The application Ref. 22/1193/FFU, dated 17 November 2022, was refused by notice dated 27 January 2023.
 - The development proposed is erection of single storey front and rear extension, erection of new pitched roof to the front to comprise habitable space within loft area and erection of side dormers and roof lights. Restyling of existing elevation to comprise white render finish, brick slips, synthetic slates and aluminium doors and windows.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for erection of single storey front and rear extension, erection of new pitched roof to the front to comprise habitable space within loft area and erection of side dormers and roof lights. Restyling of existing elevation to comprise white render finish, brick slips, synthetic slates and aluminium doors and windows at 40 Guildford Road, West End, Woking, Surrey, GU24 9PW in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref. 22/1193/FFU dated 17 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 in accordance with those stated on the planning application form.
 - 3) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: P9247-OS (received 17.11.2022); P9247-02 Rev.A (Revision: 06.03.23).
 - 4) No development shall commence above slab level until details of both hard and soft landscaping works to the front boundary to the application site facing Guildford Road have been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The landscaping works shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details before any part of the development hereby permitted is first occupied.

Preliminary Matters

2. Appendix 1 of the Appellant's Grounds of Appeal included a revised plan (drawing No. P9247-02 Rev.A) to correct the discrepancy between the position of the proposed rooflights on the original floor and elevation plan, drawing No. P9247-02. Those discrepancies were referred to in the Council's Delegated Report (CDR) and decision notice. I consulted the parties on this and they confirmed that the revised plan had not been submitted prior to the determination of the application. The Council's response also argued that the revised plan went further by including material changes to the internal layout and fenestration, which they considered to be wholly unreasonable. I accept that the appeal process should not generally be used to evolve a scheme and that I initially considered determining the appeal on the basis of the original plan. However, having considered the issue further and reviewed the submitted evidence, I am satisfied that the revised plan should be accepted.
3. The changes shown on the revised plan simply involve removing the proposed rooflights on the north-west elevation of the host property (as extended) and removing an internal wall/ensuite to bedroom 4. Those changes are, in my view, modest. They are not substantial changes to the overall scheme for which planning permission is sought. Of equal importance is that the changes do not prejudice the interests of interested parties. On the contrary, the deletion of the rooflights would overcome one of the principal objections from interested parties (neighbouring occupiers) and the need to impose conditions to address the plan discrepancies and to control the design of the rooflights.
4. In light of the above and in applying the 'Wheatcroft Principles' (*Bernard Wheatcroft Ltd v SSE* [JPL 1082 P37]), the changes shown on the revised plan are, in my judgement, modest and the result is a proposal that is not so materially changed that to grant it would deprive those who should have been consulted on the changed development of the opportunity of such consultation. As such, the determination of this appeal on the basis of the revised plan would not prejudice the interests of interested parties. I have therefore determined the appeal on the basis of drawing No. P9247-02 Rev.A (Revision: 06.03.23).

Main Issues

5. The main issues are the effect of the development on (a) the character and appearance of the host property and surrounding area; and (b) the living conditions of future and neighbouring occupiers.

Reasons

Character and appearance

6. The appeal proposal involves a number of elements including the insertion of rooflights and two dormer windows on the south-east flank of the host property (as extended) and use of a new pallet of materials, to which the Council do not object. The Council do contend that the proposed front and rear single storey extensions and new front pitched roof would result in harm to the character and appearance of the host property and surrounding area, and lead to an overdevelopment of the site.
7. The appeal site fronts onto Guildford Road and comprises a detached chalet style bungalow with accommodation in the roof. The existing frontage to the host property is set back a significant distance from the Road with the front

garden used for parking. Beyond the front boundary is a grass verge, public pavement and a bus layby. Although the front part of the appeal site is narrow the rear includes an extensive garden.

8. The surrounding area comprises a mix of commercial and residential uses. There is no prevailing character with properties varying in terms of their layout, scale, form, footprint, architectural style and materials. The adjoining public house dominates this part of the streetscene as a result of its large car park fronting onto the Road and its courtyard of buildings, which I understand are guest rooms. To the north west of the appeal site is a property known as Heathcote, which fronts onto Brentmoor Road but has a return boundary to Guildford Road formed by a high hedge.
9. Based on my observations on site, I am satisfied that the proposed rear extension would be hidden from public views by a combination of its siting at the rear, the presence of existing buildings on adjoining sites specifically the courtyard to the public house and by existing boundary fencing/hedging. As such, this element of the proposal would not have any harmful impact on the streetscene. Similarly, it would not have any impact on the appearance of the host property. On the contrary, its flat roofed design with glazed apex would result in a contemporary design that integrates well with the rear gable end to the host property. It would be both subservient and proportional to the host.
10. Whilst I accept that the proposed front extension and new front pitched roof would result in an increase in the bulk of the host property, that increase would be modest and would not be harmful to the host or to the streetscene. The proposed front extension would not project beyond the existing building line other than where its eaves marginally overhang. As such, the host building, as extended, would still be set back a considerable distance from Guildford Road. Although there are public views of the host property as you pass by the site, those views would be of an open porch and flat roofed contemporary extension of high quality that would be an improvement on the existing frontage which is of little, if any, architectural value or merit.
11. As I observed on my site visit, a low wall and high hedge that occupied part of the frontage of the appeal site has been removed to accommodate what appear to be new services. In view of this and as the submitted plans do not show any replacement boundary treatment, new boundary treatment would be required and this is a matter that can be dealt with by way of a condition requiring the submission and approval of a hard and soft landscaping scheme.
12. The proposed front extension and new pitched roof would again be subservient and proportional to the host property. I also agree with the Appellant that the new pitched roof would result in a more uniform appearance to the main roof to the host, compared to the awkward way in which the roof currently steps down. As such, these elements would not appear alien or incongruous to the host or wider streetscene. Combined with the new pallet of materials this aspect of the proposal would sit comfortably on the appeal site.
13. The Council contend that the appeal proposal would result in an elongated building and that the modest proportions of the host would be lost. I do not agree. The footprint of the host, as extended, would not be excessive given its generous plot size and the elongated nature of the property is a reflection of its narrow plot and as the Appellant highlights is not an uncommon feature with similar extended (elongated) properties in the area. Even so, the proposal

would result in high quality additions to the host, providing more interest and integrating well with the host and streetscene. Whilst I accept that there would be a material change to the scale and design of the host property I am satisfied that all the proposed changes would be acceptable in refreshing and improving its appearance and providing a better balance to the host property.

14. As to the Council's allegation of overdevelopment, there is no detailed evidence or reasoning before me to support that statement. Indeed, I fail to see how a front extension that does not encroach beyond the existing building line, a front roof extension that essentially replaces part of the existing hip end and the modest rear extension, that would still leave a substantial garden area, could amount to the overdevelopment of the site. Most of the open frontage to the appeal site would remain as existing, the space about the host building and to its neighbours would largely remain unchanged and there would remain more than sufficient space for on-site parking.
15. In relation to the Residential Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (September 2017) (RDG), for the above reasons, the appeal proposal: would not undermine the streetscene or erode local character; would be subservient, sympathetic and proportional to the host; and would not project beyond the existing building line. In view of this, the appeal proposal would comply with Principles 10.1, 10.2, 10.4 and 10.5 to the RDG. Turning to the West End Village Design Statement Supplementary Planning Document (August 2016) (VDS), for similar reasons, the proposal would be complementary to the host property in terms of its proportions, style and use of materials. In view of this, the appeal proposal would comply with Design Guideline 5 of the VDS. The Council have also referred to Design Guideline 3 but this relates to materials to which the Council have not objected. Even if this reference is not an error, as I confirmed above the proposed pallet of materials would be acceptable.
16. Support for the above findings is provided by paragraph 130 of the National Planning Policy Framework (July 2021) (Framework) in that it states that being sympathetic to local character should not prevent or discourage appropriate innovation or change. Also, by paragraph 44 of the National Design Guide (NDG) (January 2021) which states that well designed places do not need to copy their surroundings and that it is appropriate for new development to include innovation and change to reflect how we live today.
17. 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) (SHCS), Principles 10.1, 10.2, 10.4 and 10.5 of the RDG, Design Guidelines 3 and 5 of the VDS and the corresponding policies of the Framework and NDG. Policy DM9 seeks, 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.

Living conditions – future and existing occupiers

18. As I confirmed earlier, the revised plan shows the removal of the proposed rooflights on the north-west flank and an internal ensuite bathroom enabling bedroom 4 to benefit from the light and safe means of exit provided by the new dormer on the south-west flank. The removal of the rooflights would also address one of the principal objections of the occupiers of Heathcote, Ridgewood Cottage and its Annex. As I also confirmed earlier, based on my assessment of the original proposed layout to bedroom 4 and having seen on

my site visit the views that the existing rooflights to the host property afforded, I am not convinced that the proposed rooflights would have resulted in any harm to the living conditions of neighbouring occupiers or that any outstanding concerns could not have been controlled by a condition restricting, for example, the rooflights line of sight and opening. Similarly I am not convinced that the standard of accommodation resulting from the layout of bedroom 4 would have been unacceptable. The provision of rooflights to a bedroom is a common and accepted feature of loft conversions.

19. The Council also contend that the proposed rear extension would have an overbearing impact on the neighbouring occupiers of Ridgewood Cottage and the Annex. I do not agree. The new extension would not encroach any closer to the neighbours than the host building and would be set back some 2 metres from the common boundary, which comprises a high timber fence. The eaves to the new extension would be kept low due to its flat roofed design. In view of the above and whist I accept that the proposal would extend above the height of the common boundary and thus be visible to the adjoining occupiers, I am satisfied that the proposed extension would not appear overbearing or unneighbourly. I accept that there would be some impact on their living conditions but the level of harm would be limited and would not be sufficient to justify the refusal of planning permission. For the same reasons, the proposed ground floor windows on the north-west flank, a number of which are existing or being repositioned, would not result in any harmful increase in overlooking.
20. Accordingly, I find that the appeal proposal would not lead to any material harm to the living conditions of the neighbouring occupiers and would be compliant, in this respect, with policy DM9 of the SHCS, Principles 8.1 and 10.1 of the RDG and paragraph 130 f) of the Framework. These seek, amongst other requirements, to ensure that new development respects and does not result in a material loss of amenity to neighbouring properties.

Conditions

21. 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 submitted plans and for materials to be in accordance with those in the application form are necessary and reasonable to secure a high quality development. I have, however, added a list of approved plans for clarity.
22. I also consider and have added a condition to secure a hard and soft landscaping scheme for the frontage of the appeal site, which is necessary and reasonable given the removal of the previous boundary treatment in this location, the absence of any such details on the submitted plans and in order to secure a high quality development.

Conclusion

23. 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