



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 4 July 2023

by V Simpson BSc (Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 24 July 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/X0360/D/23/3314483

10 Ilfracombe Way, Earley, Wokingham, RG6 3AQ

- 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 Jitesh Kapasi against the decision of Wokingham Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 222875, dated 22 September 2022, was refused by notice dated 27 October 2022.
 - The development proposed is described as 'Proposed conversion of a garage into a habitable room'.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for the conversion of a garage into a habitable room at 10 Ilfracombe Way, Wokingham RG6 3AQ in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref 222875, dated 22 September 2022, subject to the following conditions.
 - 1) The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than 3 years from the date of this decision.
 - 2) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans MD5085/HH-01/SP rev A, MD5085/HH-04/SP, and MD5085/HH-05/SP.
 - 3) The materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of the development hereby permitted shall match those used in the existing building.

Preliminary Matters

2. Both main parties have confirmed that the appeal site is not within the Green Belt.
3. The word 'proposed' has been removed from the description of development within the decision, as it does not comprise an act of development.

Policy Context

4. Amongst other things, Policies CP1, CP2 and CP3 of the Wokingham Borough Council Wokingham Borough Local Development Framework Adopted Core Strategy Development Plan Document dated 2010 (the Core Strategy) broadly seek to ensure that development maintains and enhances the character and appearance of its context, as well as contribute to the provision of sustainable and inclusive communities. Policies CP1 and CP6 of the Core Strategy are also supportive of schemes that; reduce the need to travel, particularly by private

car; provide appropriate parking having regard to car ownership; enhance road safety; and do not cause highway problems.

5. Policy CC07 of the Wokingham Borough Council Wokingham Borough Development Plan Adopted Managing Development Delivery Local Plan 2014 (the Local Plan) is a restrictive policy, indicating that planning permission will only be granted where the proposal demonstrates how the proposed parking provision meets the standards set out in Appendix 2 and that the new scheme retains an appropriate overall level of off-street parking. Appendix 2 provides details of recommended or suggested parking standards.
6. Chapters 9 and 12 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) similarly guide that developments should minimise the scope for conflicts between pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles, and that they should function well and add to the overall quality of the area at the same time as creating places that are safe, inclusive and accessible. Paragraph 111 of the Framework indicates that development should only be prevented or refused on highway grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe. Sections P1, P2 and P3 of the Wokingham Borough Council Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document dated 2012 (the SPD) are broadly consistent with the development plan policies previously indicated.

Main Issue

7. The main issue is whether the car parking provision associated with the proposal would be acceptable or not.

Reasons

8. The appeal site is located in a built-up, mainly residential area, and is within reasonable walking distance of a range of modes of public transport. Within Ilfracombe Way, car parking provision comprises a mix of private parking within the curtilages of dwellings and on-street parking. Individual parking spaces within the street are not demarked or allocated to individual properties.
9. Within Appendix 2 of the Local Plan, it is indicated that a garage of sufficient size may be counted as 0.5 of an allocated space. However, to my mind, a garage serving a single house, is either of a suitable size to accommodate the parking of a car or it is not. In this case, the width of the garage is narrow. While it may be physically possible to park a standard-sized car within it, access and ingress to any car so parked would be very difficult and inconvenient. I, therefore, find that the garage is not of sufficient size to make it reasonably likely to be used for car parking purposes. On this basis, I am unable to conclude that it can be relied upon to provide an allocated car parking space. Therefore, and even though only 1 car parking space would be provided within the appeal site, I do not accept that the loss of the garage would reduce the amount of car parking provision within the site or lead to an associated increase in demand for on-street parking in the area.
10. Although the Council has indicated that a minimum of 2 parking spaces would be required, it is not clear from the evidence, whether any allowance for existing unallocated on-street parking provision could be included in this number.

11. The development would increase the number of habitable rooms within the dwelling by 1. Even if the resultant number of habitable rooms were to rise from six to seven, then based on the content of tables C3-3 and C3-4 of Appendix 2 of the Local Plan, the corresponding increase in unallocated parking demand would be very small (an increase of 0.2spaces).
12. I accept that the restricted width of the carriageway; the number and frequency of vehicle cross-overs; and the spur roads, all serve to limit the level of suitable and safe on-street car parking within Ilfracombe Way. Although a snap-shot in time, during my mid-week and early afternoon site visit, there was some on-street parking availability close to the appeal site. However, from both the evidence and my observations on site, I accept that there is relatively high pressure for on-street car parking in the area.
13. However, the intended use of the proposed development is as a study, which the evidence suggests would be used by existing residents of the house. Even if there were to be a very small increase in demand for on-street parking, it would be of such a small amount that it would not have a materially harmful effect on the pressure for and availability of on-street car parking within the area.
14. For the reasons given above, I have no basis to conclude that the proposed development would pose an unacceptable highway safety risk, or that it would harmfully exacerbate the negative impacts of parked cars within the street scene. I, therefore, find that the car parking provision associated with the proposal would be acceptable. Accordingly, and in respect of this main issue, I find no conflict with the requirements of Policies CC07 of the Local Plan or Policies CP1, CP2, CP3, and CP6 of the Core Strategy. Nor, in this respect, would the development conflict with Sections P1, P2, and P3 of the SPD, the National Design Guide, which seeks to secure well-designed places, and chapters 9 and 12 of the Framework.

Conditions

15. The statutory condition which specifies the time period for the implementation of the permission is imposed. For clarity, a plans condition is also imposed which identifies the plans to which this permission relates. In order to protect the character and appearance of the area a matching materials condition is also necessary.

Conclusion

16. For the reasons given above and having regard to the development plan as a whole and other material considerations, I conclude that the appeal should be allowed.

V Simpson

INSPECTOR