

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 19 July 2023

by D Cramond BSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 09 August 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/C3620/D/23/3323278

5, The Garstons, Bookham, Leatherhead, Surrey, KT23 3DT

- 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 Tim Spencer against the decision of Mole Valley District Council.
 - The application Ref MO/2023/0025/PLAH, dated 9 January 2023, was refused by notice dated 13 March 2023.
 - The development proposed is the erection of a part first floor extension, changes to the roof to create a new first floor habitable accommodation within the altered roof space along with new roof lights.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Costs

2. An application for costs has been made by the Appellant against the Council. This application is the subject of a separate decision.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the locality.

Reasons

Character and appearance

4. The appeal property is a bungalow with a low and higher gable facing the road and the main ridge running towards the rear of this rectangular plot. The locality is suburban in character; visually unremarkable but pleasant, with this stretch of The Garstons being primarily bungalows. The appeal property's design is mirrored to the south and similar homes lie across the road. The proposal is as described above and would primarily provide for two bedrooms and a bathroom.
 5. To accommodate the upper floor accommodation the scheme includes the raising of the whole north side wall and running a flat roof over this to reach the main present central ridge. Seen from the street the property would thus have a sloping pitch one side and a flat roof over the other half. There would be no sense of balance whatsoever. Furthermore, stark vertical two storey walling, alien in this immediate vicinity, topped by a uncharacteristic flat roof, would directly face the road at the front, in a prominent position opposite a
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junction, and be evident from an appreciable stretch of The Garstons not least because the adjoining home is set back. The result of the planned changes would be a home with its original form and scale swamped, with an ungainly box like appearance for a large part of its structure, creating a disproportionate dwelling to its setting and, overall, markedly ill-at-ease visually in this locality.

6. I would underline that I do understand the Appellant's wish to modernise the property. I appreciate the views expressed in the Council's Built Up Area Character Assessment SPD which are cited by the Appellant as a pointer for change. I would certainly not suggest that the current dwelling should be set in aspic or that some form of re-modelling could not be considered on its merits. However, regrettably, the approach embodied within the appeal scheme would, in my opinion, represent poor design unacceptably harmful to the aesthetics of this individual property and the wider locality.
7. Policy CS14 of the Mole Valley Core Strategy, Saved Policies ENV22 and ENV32 of the Mole Valley Local Plan, and Bookham Neighbourhood Development Plan Policy BKEN2 are relevant. Taken together, and amongst other matters, they call for high quality designs for extensions sympathetic to, and in scale with, the character of a building and its setting and also protective of the local streetscene. I conclude that the appeal scheme would run contrary to these policies.

Other matters

8. I sympathise with the aim to increase accommodation and appreciate the benefits this would bring to the Appellant's family; I hope that a suitable solution can be found to provide some increase in space at this property. I recognise that the Appellant has given thought to the selection of materials, energy efficiency, and other matters to encompass degrees of sustainability. I note that neighbours have not objected and that, rightly, no concerns over residential amenity are raised by the Council. I can see why the Appellant is protective of the existing garden area. I am cognisant of the Court Decisions drawn to my attention and I have carefully considered all the local examples and decisions relating to extensions and changes to other properties but due to design, scale, location or context I found none to be directly comparable to the appeal scheme. In any event I must assess the appeal proposal on its own merits. Mention is made of a fall-back scenario at the appeal property but no scheme is presented and I have a planning proposal before me to assess.
9. I have carefully considered all the points raised by the Appellant but these matters, either individually or collectively, do not outweigh the concerns which I have in relation to the main issue identified above.
10. I confirm that policies in the National Planning Policy Framework have been considered; the Councils' policies which I cite mirror its relevant objectives.

Overall conclusion

11. 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. Accordingly, the appeal is dismissed.

D Cramond
INSPECTOR