



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 16 August 2023

by Penelope Metcalfe BA(Hons) MSc DipUP DipDBE MRTPI IHBC

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 30th August 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/X0360/D/23/3319260

Chasleton, Lower Wokingham Road, Crowthorne, Wokingham, RG45 6DB

- 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 David Forster against the decision of Wokingham Borough Council.
 - The application Ref. 223754, dated 18 December 2022, was refused by notice dated 26 January 2023.
 - The development proposed is new detached double garage within property boundary.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main issue

2. I consider that the main issue in this case is its effect on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

3. Chasleton is a detached two storey house located on the eastern side of the A321 Lower Wokingham road, which is designated a Green Route. The front garden area is mostly laid to paved hardstanding with gravelled strips along the side boundaries and into the southwest corner. The surrounding area has a spacious, verdant appearance, characterised by detached houses set well back from the road in good sized plots. A verge and footpath runs between the carriageway and the front boundaries of the properties along the road and there are numerous mature trees in the highway verge and in front gardens. A Scots Pine and an Oak adjacent to the front boundary fence of Chasleton are subject to a Tree Preservation Order.
4. I consider the relevant policies in this case are policies CP1 and CP3 of the Wokingham Borough Local Development Framework adopted Core Strategy Development Plan Document 2010 (the Core Strategy) and policies CC03 and TB21 of the Wokingham Borough Development Plan adopted Managing Development Delivery Local Plan 2014 (the local plan). Among other things, these seek to maintain the high quality of the environment and protect the Borough's Green Infrastructure networks and protect and retain existing trees.
5. The Council's Supplementary Planning Document *Borough Design Guide* 2012 provides additional guidance on development affecting existing properties, including that garages should not be sited in front gardens and should not project forward of the building line of a property.

6. These policies and guidance are consistent with the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) in terms of its emphasis on the importance of good design in new development which should be visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and landscaping and the retention and protection of trees based on an understanding of and respect for local character.
7. I consider that the proposed garage would have a visually detrimental impact on the character and appearance of the area because of its size, occupying approximately half the width of the site, and its location in close proximity to the front boundary fence. The proposal is a revised scheme following refusal of planning permission for a garage with a higher, steeper pitched roof. While the revised scheme would be some improvement on the earlier one, it would still dominate the entrance to the property and appear prominent in the street scene.
8. It would be partially screened by the existing fence, but the plans submitted with the application indicate that there would be insufficient space between the garage and the fence to allow for planting to provide adequate additional screening in sympathy with the verdant character and appearance of the surroundings. A number of Leylandii trees have been planted in the highway verge to provide additional screening, but these are outside the site and therefore outside the control of the appellant. I understand that they may not be able to be retained as they have the potential to grow too large very quickly and obstruct the footway. They cannot therefore be relied on as a means of screening the development.
9. There are several other examples of garages in front gardens nearby. Many of these are in larger plots and set some distance back from the front boundary or are a sufficient distance back to be screened from most views by a variety of vegetation. The garage/carport at Bramley Dene is close to the front boundary of its site but even here there is sufficient space to allow for planting around the building and between it and the boundary fence. The details of the garage at College House, built as part of the approved scheme for the new house, are not before me but it appears to me that although the garage is visible from the street, it is set at sufficient distance from the front boundary to allow adequate planting.
10. The appellant has supplied insufficient information with the application to allow the Council to carry out the necessary consultations and assess the potential impact of the proposal on the protected trees adjacent to the site in close proximity to the proposed garage. These make an important contribution to the Green Route and any damage to or loss of them would be detrimental to the visual amenity of the area.
11. I conclude that the proposed garage would harm the character and appearance of the property itself, the surrounding area and the Green Route, contrary to policies CP1 and CP3 of the Core Strategy and CC03 and TB21 of the local plan, the SPD, the Framework and BS5837:2012 Trees in Relation to Design, Demolition and Construction.
12. For the reasons given above, the appeal is dismissed.

PAG Metcalfe

INSPECTOR