



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 8 November 2023

by Stewart Glassar BSc (Hons) MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date:

Appeal Ref: APP/C1435/D/23/3322900

Strathbourne, Vale Road, Mayfield, East Sussex, TN20 6BD

- 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 R Sharma against the decision of Wealden District Council.
 - The application Ref WD/2023/0530/FR, dated 16 February 2023, was refused by notice dated 15 May 2023.
 - The development proposed is the erection of raised platform connected to garage.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for the erection of raised platform connected to garage at Strathbourne, Vale Road, Mayfield, East Sussex TN20 6BD in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref WD/2023/0530/FR, dated 16 February 2023, subject to the following condition:
 - 1) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans:
 - Constructed elevations, floor plans, roof plan and site plan
Drawing Reference: pd/sb/rwf/01 (dated 28.04.23)
 - Site Location Plan
Drawing Reference: pd/sb/rwf/03 (dated 01.11.22)

Preliminary Matter

2. I have omitted from the description of development in the banner heading the reference to the garage having been recently approved as it is not an act of development.

Main Issue

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

Reasons

4. The site is at the southern end of Vale Road, a narrow road that connects the appeal site and several other properties with the settlement of Mayfield. Wider southerly views of the site are constrained by the mature planting along the eastern side of Vale Road and the buildings of the adjacent property. Fencing around the appeal site itself also screens views into the site from Vale Road and the adjacent footpath.
5. The platform is on the northern side of an existing detached triple garage, which has accommodation in its roof space. The garage building is positioned close to the site entrance and sits to the north of the dwelling. Given the

general fall in land levels from north to south, the dwelling and garage buildings are visible above the entrance gates from Vale Road but the platform itself is largely screened by them. This layout also ensures that the platform is shielded by both the garage and dwelling from wider views from the south. As such the structure cannot be seen within the wider landscape which helps to conserve the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) in which the site sits.

6. The sloping nature of the site means that the platform does not sit overly high above the highest point of the land adjacent to it. It is no wider than the garage building, whilst the wooden railings are not of excessive height above the main deck. The space under the platform is not enclosed and although it has a sizable 'footprint', the structure's overall arrangement and design give it an open appearance that has a limited visual effect.
7. The garage building appears to have been designed and finished to compliment the appearance of the main dwelling. Its design is uncomplicated, and together with the use of timber cladding, is in my opinion appropriate in this location. The platform similarly has a straightforward design and neither this nor its wooden construction nor the gabions underneath the platform that retain the banked earth, result in it being out of keeping with either the garage or the dwelling.
8. The platform provides access to the upper floor of the garage building but also creates a possible social space for that accommodation. For example, when I visited the site the decked area contained tables, chairs and a gas barbecue. Thus, although the physical works would be largely hidden from wider public views, any activity on the main part of the structure would be more visible from outside the site.
9. However, use of this area would generally be seen against a backdrop of the garage building itself and the house beyond or the mature boundary planting to the side. Given the nature of the site and the buildings previously approved, such activity is unlikely to be seen as being out of keeping with the residential nature of the site and what might reasonably be expected by any passers-by.
10. I therefore find that the platform itself would not be widely visible and would not disrupt the prevailing character of the immediate vicinity or, to the extent that one exists, the 'streetscene'. Similarly, I do not find its appearance to be out of keeping with the appeal site as a whole nor harmful to the wider Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).
11. Accordingly, the proposal conforms with Policies GD2, EN1, EN6, EN27 and DC19 of the adopted Wealden Local Plan 1998; and Spatial Planning Objectives SPO1 and SPO13 and Policy WCS14, of the adopted Wealden Core Strategy Local Plan 2013. Collectively, these policies, amongst other things, indicate that development in such locations should be of a scale, form, design and materials that are appropriate, sympathetic and respectful of existing buildings and the landscape, as well as ensuring they conserve the natural beauty of the AONB.
12. The Council has also cited Wealden Local Plan Policy DC17, but I have not found it to be relevant to this appeal given that it appears to relate to housing development rather than extensions to existing properties.

13. I have not been provided with a copy of the Wealden Design Guide 2008 but as this should be in accordance with development plan policy to which I have found the proposal would comply, it does not alter my decision.
14. The proposal would also accord with the National Planning Policy Framework, which amongst other things, seeks to ensure developments are sympathetic to local character and that the AONB is protected.

Conditions

15. As the works have commenced, the standard time limit condition is not necessary. However, a condition is required in the interests of certainty that lists the approved plans.

Conclusion

16. For the reasons given above, having considered the development plan as a whole, along with all other relevant material considerations, I conclude that the appeal should be allowed subject to the condition above.

Stewart Glassar

INSPECTOR