

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 19 October 2023

by Martin Andrews MA(Planning) BSc(Econ) DipTP & DipTP(Dist) MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 30 November 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/X0360/D/23/3329764

28 Sturges Road, Wokingham RG40 2HE

- 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 Phil Goodall against the decision of Wokingham Borough Council.
 - The application, Ref. 231401, dated 7 June 2023 was refused by notice dated 7 August 2023.
 - The development proposed* is the erection of a single storey side/rear extension following the demolition of the existing conservatory; part garage conversion to create habitable accommodation, plus the insertion of a rear dormer and addition of roof lights to extend the existing habitable loft space. (*See paragraph 2 below)
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for the erection of a single storey side/rear extension following the demolition of the existing conservatory; part garage conversion to create habitable accommodation, plus the insertion of a rear dormer and addition of roof lights to extend the existing habitable loft space at 28 Sturges Road, Wokingham in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref. 231401, dated 7 June 2023 and subject to the following conditions:
 - 1) The development to which this permission relates shall be begun not later than the expiration of three years beginning with the date of this Decision.
 - 2) The materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of the proposed dormer shall be first submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.
 - 3) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: Location & Block Plan; Composite Drawing No. 1a – 24.10.23 comprising Existing GF Plan; Proposed GF Plan; Existing FF Plan; Proposed FF Plan; Existing Loft Plan; Proposed Loft Plan; Existing Roof Plan; Proposed Roof Plan; Existing Elevations; Proposed Elevations.

Preliminary Matter

2. The application form refers only to a rear dormer extension and without its amendment this remains the lawful description of the development. However, I consider it expedient to determine the appeal on the basis of the revised
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description as this appears to have been agreed by the appellant when the application was registered as valid. (See also paragraph 4 below).

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development on the character or appearance of the Murdoch Road Conservation Area.

Reasons

4. The Notice of Refusal refers only to the proposed rear dormer as the objection to the scheme and it is explained in the appeal documentation that this element was omitted from a previous proposal under reference 230220 to enable the approval of the other alterations and additions.
5. The appeal dwelling is one half of a semi-detached Victorian pair and despite the addition of an attached modern garage, on balance makes a positive contribution to the street scene of Sturges Road. In the Council's view No. 28 merits 'non-designated heritage asset' status. However, I share the appellant's reservations as to the soundness of that assertion given the specific guidance on this in the National Planning Policy Guidance, and the absence of other supporting evidence, as referred to in the grounds of appeal.
6. Be that as it may, whilst I acknowledge the essence of the Council's view that the proposed dormer's design owes more to the appellant's requirement for additional floor area than being sympathetic to its period character, the combination of the 0.65m set-in from the side elevation and the close proximity of No. 30 would to all intents and purposes preclude any view from the public realm.
7. Nor would the dormer easily be seen in private views from the properties in Mole Close, given the long garden and extensive tree cover to the rear. And in more immediate private views, the elongated two storey gabled rear projections of the host dwelling and its neighbour at No. 30 would both partly restrict views and result in the proposed roof extension being perceived as proportionate to the surrounding built form, as opposed to drawing the eye by being overly dominant.
8. Overall, I concur with the appellant's view that the impact of the proposed dormer would be 'negligible' and thereby insufficient to have any measurable effect on the character and appearance of the Murdoch Road Conservation Area, which would therefore be preserved. Nor in my view does the property in itself have sufficient intrinsic historical or architectural merit to warrant a refusal of permission for the reasons given.
9. Accordingly, there would be no harmful conflict with Policies CP1 and CP3 of the Wokingham Core Strategy 2010; Policy TB24 of the Wokingham 'Managing Development Delivery' Local Plan 2014, or with Sections 12 & 16 of Government policy in the National Planning Policy Framework 2023.
10. I shall therefore allow the appeal. A condition in respect of external materials will maintain visual amenity, whilst a condition requiring the development to be carried out in accordance with the approved plans is needed for the avoidance of doubt and is in the interests of proper planning.

Martin Andrews

INSPECTOR