



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 6 December 2023

by G Ellis BSc (Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 21.12.2023

Appeal Ref: APP/A3655/D/23/3323277

Qaro, Pyrford Heath, Pyrford, Woking GU22 8SR

- 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 O Alongi against the decision of the Woking Borough Council.
 - The application Ref PLAN/2023/0033, dated 28 December 2022, was refused by notice dated 25 May 2023.
 - The development proposed is the construction of an additional storey and associated hipped roof and the installation of external insulation, increase in height of ridge, changes to external materials, changes to fenestration, front porch addition and installation of solar panels.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are the effect of the development on: -
 - the character and appearance of the host property and the surrounding area; and
 - the living conditions of the occupiers of Summerley with regard to overbearing impact.

Preliminary Matters and Background

3. Permission has been granted under Council reference PLAN/2020/0894 for a prior notification for the enlargement of a dwellinghouse by the construction of an additional storey. The appellant promotes this as a fallback which I consider further below.
4. The description of development in the header above has been taken from the Council's decision notice as this more accurately and comprehensively describes the development. Whilst the appellant refers to the proposal as an amendment to the above prior approval scheme it is a separate application for planning permission. As such, it is a different assessment process to that of the prior approval with the Development Plan as the starting point.

Reasons

Character and Appearance

5. Pyrford Heath is a private road which has a spacious and sylvan character with the properties set some distance back from the road and large trees to the

front gardens. There is a mixture of properties including some substantial houses, however, Oaro is a detached bungalow positioned to the southern side within a row of similar 'L' shaped bungalows.

6. The proposed two-storey form would be distinctively at odds with the bungalows to either side and its prominent visual presence would be further emphasised by the materials and more contemporary features of the extended property. While there are a variety of house styles and materials in the wider area, the appeal site is largely viewed within the surrounding group of low-profile bungalows. The design and height of the proposal would appear incongruous in this context and feature as a harmful addition to the Pyrford Heath street scene.
7. The prior approval scheme would however result in a similar two-storey property. In line with the conditions for Class AA¹ the first-floor addition is restricted to the existing footprint and the materials are to match. The appellant explains that the appeal proposal increases the depth of the walls and ridge height to accommodate insulation and advises that other insulation options would be less efficient and cost-effective. Nonetheless, there is nothing before me to suggest that the prior approval scheme could not and would not possibly be built, and I accept that it provides a fallback and is of significance.
8. There is some variation in the figures referred to but based on the table in the Council's officer's report, the plans and the appellant's statement the increase in the various dimensions (height, depth, width) between the two schemes are all below 1m. The changes to the individual elements may be modest but together they increase the scale of the development and inevitably the fallback would result in a smaller building. I also find, whilst the proposed materials are in themselves not objectionable, the form and architectural features of the fallback would have greater cohesion with its surroundings. It would not be overly dissimilar in design to the two-storey property to the west, beyond the row of bungalows, and the existing separation to the neighbouring properties would be maintained. I accept that the design of new development does not have to copy its surroundings, however, overall the fallback would be less harmful and therefore it is not a matter which outweighs the harm that I have found.
9. Consequently, I find that the proposal would result in harm to the character and appearance of the host dwelling and the wider area contrary to Policy CS21 of the Woking Core Strategy (2012), policies BE1 and BE3 of the Pyrford Neighbourhood Plan (2017), and the 'Woking Design' SPD (2015). Together these promote high-quality design which respects and makes a positive contribution to the street scene and character of the area. There would also be conflict with the similar design objectives of the National Planning Policy Framework.

Summerley

10. Oaro currently extends further back than the neighbouring property, Summerley. Due to the single-storey form, the eaves of the existing property are not significantly higher than the boundary fencing, whereas the proposal

¹ Class AA (b) Part 1, Schedule 2 of The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order (2015) (as amended).

would result in a continuous two-storey façade extending approximately half the depth of Summerley's garden.

11. The parties, nevertheless, agree that the development would not extend beyond the 45 degree or 25-degree lines and would accord with the separation distances set out in the Council's Outlook, Amenity, Privacy and Daylight SPD (2022). Whilst the depth of the building would be increased and would extend slightly closer to the shared boundary, the rear section of the side elevation would be limited by the hipped roof. As such, and on balance, I find that the bulk of the side elevation and the impact of the proposed development on the neighbour's amenity would be comparable to the fallback scheme. As such, I do not find that the proposal would result in significant harm to the occupiers' living conditions to conflict with Policy CS21 of the Woking Core Strategy (2012), policy BE3 of the Pyrford Neighbourhood Plan (2017) in relation to the loss of privacy, daylight and overbearing impact.
12. Notwithstanding this, the enclosing juxtaposition and jarring height differential between the neighbouring properties will have a visual impact and alter the pattern of development which contributes to my concerns on the other main issue.

Other Matters

13. The appeal scheme would benefit from energy-efficient measures, although this could be achieved in different ways and solar panels could be added to the existing/fallback property. While the appellant infers that the external insulation could be achieved through permitted development rights there are no details before me, and the fallback property does not currently exist.
14. Third parties have raised several other matters including restrictions to construction, the loss of the bungalow and the number of planning applications which have been submitted for this property. These matters were addressed in the Council's officer report and as the appeal is to be dismissed it is not necessary for me to consider the requirements of any conditions.
15. The appellant has also raised concerns with the Council's handling of the application and while frustrations due to the lack of communication are understandable, I have considered the proposal afresh.

Planning Balance and Conclusion

16. Whilst I have not found direct harm to the living conditions of the occupiers of the neighbouring property the development would adversely impact the character and appearance of the area. The fallback would be less harmful, and no other material considerations have been shown to have sufficient weight to warrant a decision other than in accordance with the Development Plan. I therefore conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

G Ellis

INSPECTOR