



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 30 January 2024

by J Davis BSc (Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 13 February 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/M3645/D/23/3329375

74 Bluehouse Lane, Oxted, Surrey, RH8 0AD

- 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 & Mrs Day against the decision of Tandridge District Council.
 - The application Ref TA/2023/657, dated 26 May 2023, was refused by notice dated 24 July 2023.
 - The development proposed is new front garage and associated landscaping works.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the surrounding area.

Reasons

3. The appeal property is a two-storey detached dwelling with converted loft space located within a wide, deep plot. The frontage of the dwelling is formed by a grass bank and other than for some low planting along part of it, is open to the road. It is located in a row of detached dwellings which are sited within similar sized plots with front boundary treatments comprising mainly of hedging and or mature planting. There is no footpath along the southern side of this part of Bluehouse Lane. The northern side of Bluehouse Lane is more mixed in character and appearance, comprising of residential properties, a church, the Barn Theatre and Oxted School.
4. In my view, the landscaped front gardens of dwellings along Bluehouse Lane contribute to the character of the area. I also note that there are no other examples of garages or other significant structures projecting significantly forward of the front elevation of residential properties along this section of Bluehouse Lane.
5. The proposed garage would be to the front of the dwelling and would measure 6.2m by 6.2m. It would have a tiled, pyramid roof form, with a maximum height of around 3.8m. A distance of about 3.23m would be retained between the garage and the main front wall of the dwelling. The northern wall of the garage would be cut into the existing bank adjacent to Bluehouse Lane and would act as a retaining wall.

6. The proposed garage would be located adjacent to Bluehouse Lane although it would be significantly lower than the host dwelling. I acknowledge the lower eaves height of the wall which would be adjacent to the road and that the sloping roof design would mean that the garage would reach its maximum height a distance of about 5.6m from the front boundary.
7. However, notwithstanding the above, due to its overall size and close proximity to the road, the garage would be highly visible from Bluehouse Lane and also from the footpath on the opposite side of the road. In my view the garage would appear as an incongruous feature, at odds with the character and appearance of the surrounding area where there is an absence of structures to the front of dwellings which allows the landscaped frontages to predominate.
8. Whilst the existing bank would be retained, given its low height it would not provide effective screening of the proposed structure. It is suggested that additional planting could help to screen the development, but this would take time to become established and there would be no guarantee that it would be retained as an effective screen in the long term.
9. I also acknowledge that the overall size and scale of the proposed garage has been significantly reduced compared to an earlier proposal¹. However, this does not lessen my concerns regarding its effect on the character and appearance of the surrounding area.
10. I note that further to the east of the appeal site there are more examples of garages to the front of properties along Bluehouse Lane. However, these are some distance from the appeal site and are not therefore viewed in the same context. I therefore place little weight on these examples.
11. I have also been provided with an appeal decision² within Tandridge District where a new garage to the front of an existing dwelling was allowed on appeal. However, this example is in a different part of the district where the Inspector acknowledged that several nearby properties have detached garages in their front gardens near the road. Given the different context, I do not consider this decision to be relevant to the appeal proposal.
12. I therefore conclude that the proposed development would have a harmful effect on the character and appearance of the surrounding area. Thus, it would be contrary to Policy CP18 of the Tandridge District Core Strategy (adopted 15 October 2008) and Policy DP7 of the Tandridge District Local Plan Part 2: Detailed Policies 2014 – 2029 (adopted July 2014). These policies (amongst other things) expect new development to be of a high quality design which reflects and respects the existing character, setting and local context. It would also be contrary to the National Planning Policy Framework (2023) insofar as it seeks high quality design.

Conclusion

13. For the above reasons I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

J Davis

INSPECTOR

¹ LPA ref. 2022/1393

² Appeal ref. APP/M3645/D/22/3301203