

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 22 March 2024

by R C Shrimplin MA(Cantab) DipArch RIBA FRTPI FCI Arb MCIL

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 25 April 2024

Appeal Reference: APP/R3650/D/23/3329779

40 Weysprings, Haslemere, Surrey GU27 1DE

- 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 Ms. S. Harvey against the decision of Waverley Borough Council.
 - The application (reference WA/2023/00506, dated 21 February 2023) was refused by notice dated 28 June 2023.
 - The development proposed is described in the application form as “The erection of extensions and alterations alongside additional hardstanding in the front garden, following demolition of existing garage”.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main issue

2. The first main issue to be determined in this appeal is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the host building and its surroundings. The second is the effect of the proposed development on the residential amenities of neighbours (whether unacceptable harm would be caused by overbearing appearance, loss of light, overshadowing or intrusion on privacy).

Reasons

3. Weysprings is a long cul-de-sac in Haslemere, serving a development of attractive and substantial detached and semi-detached houses in traditional designs on large plots by modern standards. Nearer to the end of Weysprings, houses are located on the north-east side of the road, with open space opposite. The land slopes upwards away from the road and houses are sited above the road, with back gardens sloping up towards a belt of trees. The houses are set back from the road with relatively large front gardens, by modern standards, generally furnished with shrubs and other plants that create a leafy and pleasant suburban townscape.
4. The house at number 40 is constructed of brickwork under a hipped, tiled main roof. It is sited close to its south-eastern boundary but the house itself is inset from its north-west boundary, with a detached garage set behind the house, reached by a driveway alongside the boundary. The front garden is laid to

- grass and shrubs, with a well laid out rear garden that rises away from the back of the house.
5. It is now proposed that the existing garage should be demolished and that new extensions to the house should be constructed at the rear and side of the house. An additional hardstanding would be provided in the front garden, which would accommodate three car parking spaces in total.
 6. The 'National Planning Policy Framework' (which was revised in December 2023) emphasises the aim of "achieving well designed places" in the broadest sense (notably at Section 12), while making effective use of land and encouraging economic activity. It is aimed at achieving good design standards generally, by adding to the overall quality of the area and being visually attractive and sympathetic to local character and history (while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change). It is also recognised that appropriate change may include increased densities, though the achievement of good design standards includes protecting existing residential amenities and providing good standards of accommodation.
 7. An emphasis on the importance of encouraging good design and protecting residential amenities is also to be found in the Development Plan. Various policies are intended to promote good design in general, while the Development Plan incorporates specific Policies that are aimed at protecting residential amenities. These include Policy TD1 of the 'Waverley Borough Local Plan Part 1: Strategic Policies and Sites' (dated February 2018), Policies DM1, DM4 and DM5 of the 'Waverley Borough Local Plan Part 2: Site Allocations and Development Management Policies' (dated March 2023) and Policy H6 of the 'Farnham Neighbourhood Plan 2013-2032' (dated January 2020).
 8. Other Policies in the Development Plan encourage sustainable development more broadly.
 9. The Council's 'Residential Extensions Supplementary Planning Document' (dated October 2010) is also relevant but it does not have the force of the statutory Development Plan.
 10. The proposed extensions would involve the construction of a two-storey side extension to the main element of the existing house, extending it over part of the existing driveway. At the rear, a large extension would be constructed, part two-storey and part single-storey. The design would reflect the character of the existing property in that the brick external walls and pitched roofs would be in harmony with the existing materials.
 11. On the other hand, the ground floor extensions would include flat roofs over parts of the new kitchen, pantry and utility room as well as over part of a new ground floor bedroom. Even though these areas of flat roofs would be edged by pitched roofs, in an imitation of traditional forms of construction, the result would be awkward and ungainly and would detract from the quality of the existing house and its surroundings.
 12. Furthermore, the first floor side extension would encroach on the area between number 40 and its neighbour at number 42, in a way that would undermine the spacious and attractive qualities of the neighbourhood.

13. The visual impact of the new extensions would be exacerbated by giving over much of the front garden to car parking spaces. Taken in conjunction, all these impacts would undermine the spacious and leafy character of the streetscene in a way that would cause significant harm to the character and appearance of the surroundings.
14. The new two-storey side and rear extension would be constructed to the south of the rear part of the house at number 42 Weysprings. It would overshadow part of that neighbour's rear garden. Even so, the neighbour's garden is substantial and the overshadowing effect would not be so serious as to justify a refusal of planning permission if no other objections arose. As it is, this concern reinforces the main objection to the scheme that I have set out above.
15. Objections have also been advanced on the grounds that the proposed rear extension would incorporate windows that would overlook their neighbours or which might be perceived as doing so. On the north-west elevation, three of the windows in question would serve various bathrooms. On the south-east elevation, one window would serve a corridor (opposite a "dressing" area) and another would act as a secondary window to the main bedroom, with a similar secondary window on the opposite side.
16. All these windows could be glazed with obscured glass, or even omitted in some cases, without causing significant harm to the quality of life of future occupiers of number 40. Nevertheless, the quality of the accommodation could be somewhat diminished.
17. Evidently, the appeal site lies within an established urban area, which is "sustainable" in planning terms, and the proposed development would make a useful addition to the existing house. Nevertheless, I am convinced that the harm that would be done to the character and appearance of the existing house and to the surroundings outweigh the benefits of the project. That objection is reinforced by the impact that the scheme would have on neighbours' amenities.
18. Hence, I have concluded that the scheme before me would conflict with both national and local planning policies (including the Development Plan) and that it ought not to be allowed. Although I have considered all the matters that have been raised in the representations, I have found nothing to cause me to alter my decision.
19. In reaching these conclusions I have considered whether the appeal could be allowed but subject to conditions to address the design issues that I have identified. I have formed the opinion, however, that any such condition or set of conditions would be so complex and onerous as to be unreasonable and that therefore the appeal must be dismissed.

Roger C. Shrimplin

INSPECTOR