



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 25 July 2024

by G Roberts BA (Hons) MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 9th August 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/D1265/D/24/3345225

45 Pilford Heath Road, Colehill, BH21 2LU

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mr & Mrs Hocking against the decision of Dorset Council.
 - The application Ref is P/HOU/2024/00388
 - The development proposed is new garage with home work space above.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

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

Reasons

3. The appeal site is located on the western side of Pilford Heath Road and on the corner of its junction with Lapwing Road. The host property has recently been extended pursuant to a planning permission to raise the roof to create a two storey house with a detached single storey garage (ref 3/19/2150/HOU). The detached garage has not been built. The surrounding area comprises a mixture of single and two storey mainly detached properties set back from the road. The properties vary in terms of their scale, ridge heights, style, age and materials. Their frontages are mostly used for off street parking, landscaping and/or laid to lawn. A large number also benefit from mature hedging and trees to the road boundary that gives a positive verdant feel to the area and is part of its distinctive character.
4. Pilford Heath Road slopes downwards, from south to north, past the appeal site. In view of this and with the appeal site occupying a corner plot, the host property and its frontage are highly visible within the streetscene and in particular prominent in views when approaching on the road from the north. There is a substantial hedge on the front and side (Lapwing Road frontage) boundaries to the appeal site. Even though there is a wide gap in this hedge, in front of the host itself that provides access to off-street parking, the hedge forms an important part of the verdant character of the area.
5. The appeal proposal involves the construction of a detached garage with work space above, on the frontage to the appeal site. The proposal would be sited in the same location as the approved garage but would have a larger footprint. The pitched roof to the approved garage had a ridge height of some 3.8

- metres, whereas the pitched roof of the appeal proposal would be some 5.2 metres. The approved garage was also set back from the road boundary by some 1.65 metres to enable the existing hedge to be retained. Within the appeal scheme, the larger footprint would result in the building being some 0.25 metres from the road boundary, which would require the existing hedge and stone wall to be removed and replaced by border planting.
6. The Appellant has submitted a revised plan with the appeal and as far as I can ascertain the only difference is that the notation on the Proposed Site Plan referring to 'border planting' has been replaced by 'fast growing border planting'. Having compared the plans, it appears that the new building would remain some 0.25 metres from the road boundary.
 7. Paragraphs 16.1 – 16.2 of the 'Procedural Guidance: Planning Appeals – England' (updated 11 January 2024) states it is important that what is considered by the Inspector is essentially the same as that considered by the Local Planning Authority and interested parties at the application stage. Also, that the appeal process should not be used to evolve a scheme. Even so, section 5 of the Appellants Grounds of Appeal reaffirms my understanding that the only change on the Proposed Site Plan appears to be the inclusion of "*fast-growing dense hedges or trees for improved screening.*"
 8. Within the above context, I concur with the Council and consider that the increased footprint, height and scale of the new building, compared to that approved, would be excessive and would result in an incongruous addition to the appeal site that would be out of keeping with the streetscene. The proposed building would also be out of proportion and not subservient to the host property, and would visually dominate this part of the streetscene.
 9. The impact of the new building on the host property and the surrounding area would be accentuated by the appeal sites prominence when viewed from Pilford Heath Road. With the approved garage, its impact would have been softened and mitigated by the retention of the existing hedge and stone wall. Both would be removed in the appeal scheme with the proposed building sited closer to the road and with a greater scale, bulk, mass and height.
 10. Whilst the Appellants plans show new border planting, I am not convinced that this would be sufficient to allow any meaningful screening to be provided on the road boundary. The 'margin' shown for planting would be some 0.25 metres wide. In my view, this 'margin', even before you consider the impact of any foundations and possibly repairs to the pavement edge, would not be sufficient to allow for any meaningful new hedge or tree planting. Indeed, there is no detailed evidence before me to suggest that it would. It is also unclear to me as to what the revised Street Scene plan is showing, as the new border planting is depicted at a low height that would not provide any effective screening of the new building.
 11. The Appellant has referred to other examples of outbuildings and garages in the area. However, having viewed these on my site visit, I agree with the Council that they are not comparable to the appeal proposal. All the examples I viewed were single storey buildings that were well hidden and screened through a combination of site levels, siting, trees and hedging. My attention has not been drawn to any examples of two storey garages or any buildings that are as visually dominant within the streetscene as the appeal scheme would be.

12. The Appellant has also referred to the benefit of providing flexible modern accommodation for home working. Whilst that may be so, it is not sufficient on its own to outweigh the harm I have found. Similarly, I appreciate that the height of the proposed garage is less than that shown originally in the application to extend the host property (ref 3/19/2150/HOU), which was subsequently reduced to a single storey garage as approved. However, I understand that the reduction of the proposed garage to single storey was in response to concerns raised by the Council over the height, siting and relationship of the original garage to the host and road boundary. The Council continue to raise similar objections to the current revised proposal, objections which, as I have confirmed above, I fully concur with.
13. Accordingly, I find that whilst the appeal proposal would not result in an overdevelopment of the plot, the scale, bulk, mass and height of the proposed building would result in an incongruous addition that would be harmful to the character and appearance of the host property and surrounding area. That harm would not be mitigated by any proposed screening. As such, the appeal proposal would be contrary to policy HE2 (Design of New Development) of the Christchurch & East Dorset Local Plan: Part 1 Core Strategy (April 2014). This policy seeks to ensure that new development: is of a high quality that reflects and enhances local distinctiveness; and is compatible with or improves its surroundings in terms of, for example, layout, site coverage, scale, bulk, height, landscaping and visual impact.
14. That policy and its overall approach to new development remains broadly consistent with the corresponding policies in the National Planning Policy Framework (December 2023).

Conclusion

15. For the reasons given above and having taken all the matters raised into account, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

G Roberts

INSPECTOR