



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 20 February 2025

by **John D Allan BA(Hons) BTP MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 07 March 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/Y3615/D/25/3358437

Girtford, Tuckey Grove, Ripley, Surrey, GU23 6JG

- 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 Wendy Boardman against the decision of Guildford Borough Council.
 - The application Ref is 24/P/01282.
 - The development proposed is demolition of the existing detached garage and erection of a single rear and side extension to the existing building with internal alterations.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are the effects of the proposal upon: - (i) the character and appearance of the host dwelling and wider area, (ii) the living conditions at Loxwood, with particular regard to visual impact, and (iii) protected species.

Reasons

Character and Appearance

3. The appeal property is a detached bungalow with a rectangular floor plan and hipped roof with ridge running front to back. It occupies a large, wedge-shaped, corner plot with a narrow frontage to Tuckey Grove where it turns through ninety degrees. The area is a fringe urban location that is residential in character with the appeal site, and other properties along the west side of Tuckey Grove, backing onto open fields beyond. Houses in the immediate area comprise detached, two and single-storey homes of mixed sizes, ages, and appearances with traditional pitched or hipped roof forms. The proposal would see a majority portion of the existing building's fabric demolished along with a detached garage to one side. Only the south side flank and front walls would be retained. These would be incorporated into a remodelled bungalow with a rear addition projecting almost 18.5m deep beyond the existing rear wall, and which would wrap around part of the existing side elevation, projecting around 2.7m to the side, and with a comprehensive new hipped roof over.
4. The Council's *Residential Extensions and Alterations Supplementary Planning Document* (SPD) was adopted in 2018. It recognises that even small changes to buildings can have a big impact. As a general principle the SPD advises, amongst other things, that an extension or alteration should be subordinate to and in

character with the existing dwelling and should not over-dominate. It further advises that the optimum length of an extension should reflect the scale, proportion, and mass of the existing property, that roofs should be appropriately integrated with the existing property, and that extensions that face highways have active frontages.

5. I accept that the street scene is varied and as such, I do not consider the appearance of Girtford to be oversensitive to change. I also agree with the appellant that many properties along Tuckey Grove have benefitted from a variety of changes and extensions. However, I saw the majority to have been successfully undertaken in reasonably balanced and proportionate ways, with respect for the architectural composition and form of the original dwelling and appearance of the wider area. There are some examples where this is not the case, but these are by far the minority and demonstrate how poor design considerations can be harmful.
6. In this instance, the proposed works would engulf the existing building, remodelling its appearance beyond any recognition of the original, and increasing its size by a vast degree, projecting the building deep into the rear garden. I find the changes would not only be stark in terms of scale but would also result in a disproportionately elongated building that would add an unreasonable degree of sprawl over the site. This would be overtly out of keeping with the open and spacious rear garden settings that characterise the area. Its incongruous presence would be further exaggerated by an awkward chamfer along a significant length of one side elevation towards the rear, coupled with an equally awkward shift in the roof's ridge alignment when seen in both plan and elevation. In addition, the front facing double width garage would dominate the dwelling's appearance within the street scene in an uncharacteristically utilitarian manner.
7. Notwithstanding some positive attributes of the proposal, including the use of materials that would be sympathetic to the local palette and sustainable construction methods, by reason of its size, form, and appearance, I find the proposal as a whole to be poorly conceived, without respect for the modest scale and appearance of the host dwelling. By so being it would be incongruous in its setting, to the detriment of the character, visual amenities, and spacious qualities of the area. There would be conflict with a number of the SPD's guiding principles, as well as Policies H4 and D4 of the Guildford Borough Local Plan: Development Management Policies (LPDMP), adopted in 2023, and Policy D1 of the Guildford Borough Local Plan: Strategy and Sites 2015-2034 (LPSS), adopted in 2019, as far as between them they seek to ensure that development displays a high quality of design that respects and contributes to the existing context and local distinctiveness. For the same reasons there would be conflict with the National Planning Policy Framework's objectives for achieving well-designed places.

Living Conditions

8. Loxwood is a two-storey neighbouring dwelling to the south side of the appeal property. It occupies a similar front and rear building alignment to Girtford but is set at a slight angle to it due to the turn in the road. The Council accepts that the extension would not have any significant impact upon levels of daylight or sunlight to any habitable rooms within Loxwood. Due to the single-storey form of Girtford and the distance that would be maintained between both dwellings, I do not disagree.

9. I saw during my visit that there is a range of outbuildings to the rear of Loxwood and which run in a linear form abutting the common side boundary with the appeal site. These include a flat roof garage with two timber 'shed-like' buildings beyond, all of which can be seen projecting above the height of the approximate 2m high timber fence boundary enclosure. The plans show the extension would be set almost 2m away from the boundary and would project just beyond the depth of the first shed which sits behind the garage at Loxwood.
10. Although the remodelled Girtford would be single-storey with a diminishing ridge height towards the rear, the development would present itself facing the neighbouring rear garden as a disproportionately long and imposing mass of solid built form. Its overall scale would be significantly larger than the modest size of the outbuildings at Loxwood and I am not persuaded that their existence, nor the separation distance of the extension from the boundary, would be sufficient to mitigate the visually incongruous and dominant presence of the new build so close and deep into the open, rear garden setting when viewed from the neighbour's rear first-floor outlook and back garden space. This would be harmful to the living conditions at Loxwood. As such, there would be further conflict with Policy D4 by the development's failure to respond positively to the surrounding context. There would also be conflict with LPDMP Policy D5 which seeks to ensure that development avoids any unacceptable impact on the living environment of existing residential properties, and similar aims of the SPD.

Protected Species

11. The Council is of the view that because the proposal would involve demolition of an unoccupied roof within a suburban, large garden setting, there would be the potential for a protected species habitat to be present. They argue that the absence of any preliminary ecological assessment could risk harm to a protected species.
12. I note some anecdotal observations from neighbours that bats are seen flying at dusk in rear gardens. However, the reasonable likelihood of a species being present at the appeal property is not supported by any credible evidence from an appropriately qualified or experienced source. Given the limited information before me, including the absence of any standing advice from Natural England, I am unable to firmly conclude that the proposal would risk harm to any protected species or that there would be any conflict with LPSS Policy D6.

Conclusion

13. Notwithstanding my findings on the third main issue based on information available to me, I find that the proposal would be harmful to the character and appearance of the host property and wider area. There would also be harm to the living conditions of neighbouring occupiers at Loxwood. I recognise that the application was submitted in an attempt to overcome reasons for refusal that were given for an earlier scheme, but this does not alter my findings as they relate to the merits of the development that is before me. Accordingly, for the reasons given, the appeal is dismissed.

John D Allan

INSPECTOR