



The Planning Inspectorate

An Executive Agency in the Department of the Environment and the Welsh Office

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G M Combes Esq
8 Finch Road
BERKHAMSTED
Hertfordshire
HP4 3LH

Your Reference:

Our Reference:
T/APP/A1910/A/97/279428/P8

Date: 7-5 SEP 1997 DEPARTMENT
DACORUM BOROUGH COUNCIL

Dear Sir

TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990
SECTION 78 AND SCHEDULE 6
APPLICATION NUMBER: 4/1492/96

-8 SEP 1997

Comments

1. I have been appointed by the Secretary of State for the Environment to determine your appeal. This appeal is against the decision of the Dacorum Borough Council to refuse planning permission to excavate front garden to form hardstanding at 8 Finch Road, Berkhamsted, Berks. I have considered the written representations made by you and by the Council, and also those made by the Town Council directly to the Council and forwarded to me. I inspected the site on 14 August 1997.
2. From my inspection of the appeal site and surrounding area and consideration of the representations, I am of the opinion that the principal issue in this case is the effect of the proposals upon the character and appearance of the street scene.
3. The Local Authority have drawn to my attention Government advice, including PPG 1 which was revised in February of this year. Paragraphs 13-20 under the heading "Design" re-affirm the importance of urban design which includes the relationship between all the elements of the built and unbuilt space within urban areas. It suggests that the appearance and treatment of the spaces between and around buildings is often of comparable importance to the design of the buildings themselves and that landscape design, whether hard or soft, should be considered as an integral part of urban design.
4. The Development Plan comprises the Dacorum Borough Local Plan which was formally adopted in April 1995. Policy 8 states, inter-alia, that development will not be permitted unless it meets certain criteria detailed in the policy. These include (a), that the development be appropriate in terms of layout, site coverage, design, materials and landscaping in respect of the site itself and in relation to adjoining properties; (b) where relevant, should include measures to enhance the local landscape and (c), respect the townscape, density and general character of the area in which it is set.



5. Your property is approached by means of a steep concrete driveway from Finch Road which serves the garage, together with a series of steps adjacent to the driveway which lead to the front door. Given the topography of the area, many of the properties on both sides of the road have similar steep driveways, some incorporating steps. A number of the driveways have, over the years, been widened. You have drawn to my attention several nearby which I was able to inspect during my site visit. However, none of these involve the level of excavation and alterations to the appearance of the front garden as proposed in the scheme before me. Their impact upon the street scene is therefore unlikely to be comparable with the detailed proposals before me.

6. You suggest that the steepness of the existing driveway makes parking on it hazardous, and that the removal of the steps and widening of the driveway as undertaken by adjacent owners is not a real option. You consider that the proposal could be made more acceptable by adding ledges and holes to the retaining wall to allow planting and landscaping.

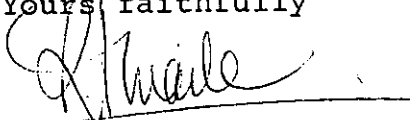
7. The surrounding development is characterised by open-fronted gardens which slope down to the road. This, in turn, has grass verges and is planted with trees which, in combination, contribute to the pleasant appearance of the locality. Although several driveways have been widened, no substantial excavation of the type proposed in this instance has been carried out. Whilst I accept that your drive may be the steepest in the road, it seems to me that this in itself is insufficient to warrant the somewhat drastic measures now proposed.

8. Other nearby residents have tackled similar problems by widening their driveways whilst maintaining a large area of planted front garden. I cannot see why your driveway cannot similarly be altered, with the steps re-positioned to take account of the widening. Any such proposals would, of necessity, have to be the subject of a planning application to the Local Authority in the first instance. In the meantime, I consider that the detailed scheme before me would be likely to have a very detrimental effect upon the appearance of the street scene by removing a large part of the planted area of the front garden and replacing it with a hard surfaced base and substantial retaining wall. The presence of a car, or cars, on the parking area so created in combination with the existing concreted driveway and the hard surfacing of a further portion of the roadside grass verge, would create an untypical and very urban feel to this part of Finch Road contrary to the relevant requirements of Policy 8 of the adopted Local Plan which I have highlighted above.

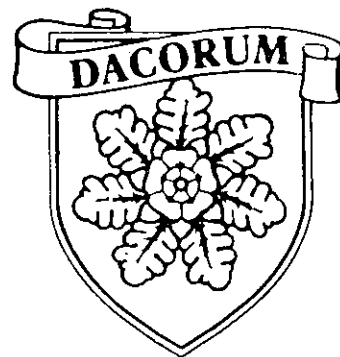
9. I have had regard to the other matters raised in the representations, but none is of sufficient strength to outweigh the considerations which have led to my decision that consent should not be granted.

10. For the above reasons, and in exercise of the powers transferred to me, I hereby dismiss your appeal.

Yours faithfully



R J Maile BSc FRICS
Inspector



TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990

DACORUM BOROUGH COUNCIL

Application Ref No. 4/1492/96

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DEVELOPMENT ADDRESS AND DESCRIPTION
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8 Finch Road, Berkhamsted, Herts

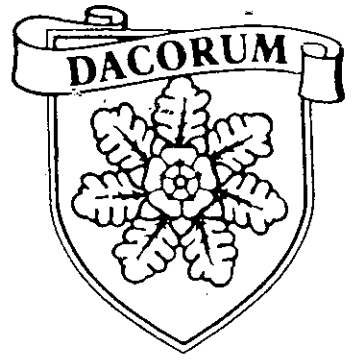
EXCAVATE FRONT GARDEN TO FORM HARDSTANDING

Your application for *full planning permission (householder)* dated 14.11.1996 and received on 15.11.1996 has been *REFUSED*, for the reasons set out on the attached sheet(s).

Director of Planning

Date of Decision: 30.01.1997

(ENC Reasons and Notes)



REASONS FOR REFUSAL
OF APPLICATION: 4/1492/96

Date of Decision: 30.01.1997

The proposed development involves the excavation of a significant area of the front garden of No. 8 Finch Road and the formation of a hard-surfaced parking area which would cause harm to the appearance of the site and the attractive, predominantly open, character of front gardens in this area of Finch Road. Accordingly the proposal is contrary to Policy 8 of the Dacorum Borough Local Plan.