

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 14 September 2016

by Siobhan Watson BA(Hons) MCD MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government

Decision date: 27 September 2016

Appeal Ref: APP/T0355/W/16/3152097
Sunnycroft, Larch Avenue, Ascot, SL5 0AP

- 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 Crownvale Properties Ltd against the decision of Council of the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead.
 - The application Ref 16/00438, dated 8 February 2016, was refused by notice dated 14 April 2016.
 - The development proposed is the demolition of existing dwelling to allow for replacement dwelling.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposed dwelling upon the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

3. The appeal site currently consists of a dwelling set within a large plot with a wealth of mature landscaping including many imposing and mature trees, especially around the boundary. The trees are subject to an area Tree Preservation Order (TPO) covering the whole of the plot. The site is within a low density residential area which is characterised by its spacious and mature landscape setting. The Council has assessed the area's townscape as "Villas in a Woodland Setting."
 4. Dwellings in the vicinity are of very mixed styles but all are substantial and detached. They have varying footprints and positions within their plots so that there is no fixed building line or any sense of uniformity. Individual houses tend to derive their visual interest by an arrangement of different components, including dormers, gables, hips, varied shapes and arrangements of windows, bays, recesses and projections, heights and broken roof-forms. Many of the houses are set a long way back from the road which gives their grand stature an appropriate and genteel setting.
 5. The proposed dwelling would have a wide form which would stretch across the plot. There are other dwellings which are similarly close to their side boundaries but the ones I observed tend to be set further back into their plots so that their front gardens and drives provide a spacious setting for them. In
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this case, the space around the frontage of the house would not be commensurate with its enormous size and stature.

6. In addition to the width and position on the plot, and although it would incorporate some of the design features of other nearby dwellings, the proposed dwelling would have an uncharacteristically regular and symmetrical form which would lead to an almost institutional appearance. Furthermore, the front gable would have a wide expanse of brick resulting in a plain and chunky feature dominating the centre of the building. Additionally, although the dwelling would not be overly tall, the crown roof would have a somewhat squat profile.
7. The particular combination of these features would result in a prominent dwelling which would lack domestic proportions giving a brash appearance, out of keeping with its surroundings. I appreciate that it would be at the end of a private road and that there are trees around the boundary but the house would still be visible. In any event, the existence of screening is not a justification for allowing poor design. I note the appellant's reference to other large scale buildings nearby but the existence of these does not justify further harmful development which, if repeated, would erode the pleasant and charming character of the area.
8. I now turn to trees. Tree T41 is competing with another larger tree, it is away from public vantage points and could be removed and replaced without harm to the woodland setting. The canopies of the trees near the proposed garage are high and unlikely to severely affect outlook or light. Therefore, I consider that the garage would not pose an unacceptable threat to the trees.
9. The eastern end of the proposed dwelling would be located very close to other protected trees. Whilst direct sunlight may only be affected in the early to mid-morning, these trees would inevitably inhibit daylight to numerous habitable room windows and create a gloomy outlook. I appreciate that the floorplans show some staff accommodation near these trees but internal layouts can be re-arranged and there is no guarantee that the rooms would be permanently occupied by staff. In any event, it is no more acceptable for staff accommodation to be shaded than it is for anyone else's accommodation to be shaded. I therefore consider that there might be pressure to fell or severely prune the trees at a later date and it may be difficult for the Council to resist an application if the living conditions of occupiers are substantially affected by a lack of light or outlook. I note the appellant's reference to an appeal decision at Halstead House¹ but I do not have the full details of that case before me and in any event, every case must be judged on its own particular merits.
10. For the above reasons, I conclude that the proposed dwelling would harm the character and appearance of the area and would conflict with Policies DG1, H11 and N6 of the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead Local Plan and Policies NP/DG1, NP/DG2, NP/DG3 and NP/EN2 of the Ascot, Sunninghill and Sunningdale Neighbourhood Plan 2011-2026, which, in combination, seek to protect the character and appearance of an area, including the protection of trees and landscaping.

¹ APP/T0355/A/12/2187786

11. I have taken into account all other matters raised, including comments from interested parties but none outweigh the conclusions I have reached.

Conclusion

12. For the reasons above, I dismiss the appeal.

Siobhan Watson

INSPECTOR