

## Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 10 October 2016

**by Christa Masters MA (hons) MRTPI**

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

**Decision date: 25 October 2016**

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**Appeal Ref: APP/A3655/W/16/3153676**

**105 Westfield Road, Westfield, Woking, Surrey GU22 9QR**

- 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 Mr & Mrs I Nawaz against the decision of Woking Borough Council.
  - The application Ref PLAN/2016/0076, dated 25 January 2016 was refused by notice dated 23 March 2016.
  - The development proposed is demolition of existing dwelling and outbuilding and construction of 2 no semi detached dwellings.
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### Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

### Procedural matter

2. The Council have confirmed that they have withdrawn the second reason for refusal which related to affordable housing provision.

### Main Issues

3. This appeal has two main issues. The effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area and whether the proposal would have an acceptable effect on the Thames Basins Heaths Special Protection Area (TBHSPA).

### Reasons

#### *Character and appearance*

4. The appeal site comprises a detached chalet style bungalow with a single vehicular crossover to Westfield Road. In common with a number of the neighbouring properties, the dwelling is set within a relatively spacious plot and extends almost the full width of the plot. The road itself is characterised by detached dwellings set in spacious plots of varying styles and designs. Beyond these individual dwellings, there is a retirement home situated further along Westfield Road to the east of the appeal site. A significant number of the surrounding dwellings have a hedge separating the dwelling from the public highway.
  5. Policy CS21 of the Core Strategy (CS) 2012 is a design policy which advises, amongst other things, that new development should make a positive contribution to the street scene and character of the area. Policy CS24 goes on
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to note that all development should provide a positive benefit in terms of landscape character and local distinctiveness.

6. The replacement dwellings would be semi detached. Whilst I note that the dwellings would follow the prevailing building line in terms of the set back from the front boundary, the officers delegated report advises that the development would result in 2 separate dwellings with plot widths of 11.6m and 9.9m. This would be in marked contrast to the established pattern of plot widths along Westfield Road. The appellant states that the visibility of the plots would be limited and screened by the existing boundary treatment. However, I am not convinced that screening an uncharacteristic development is a sound approach. As such, the proposal would in my view fail to make a positive contribution to the street scene as required by policy CS21 set out above.
7. The appellant also argues that the individual entrances would not be clearly visible. In my view, the creation of an additional vehicular access point would clearly denote that there are two dwellings within the plot. Although the appellant has referred to a number of other properties with dual access points, I have not been provided with any specific examples. My observations during the site visit were that the dwellings along Westfield Road had predominantly single vehicular access points.
8. The appellant states that the height of the new dwellings would be in line with the current building on site however I have not been provided with any existing elevations of the existing dwelling to support this assertion. The plan indicates that the bulk of the replacement dwellings would extend, at 2 storeys in height, deeper into the plot than the existing dwelling. As the neighbouring property at No 103 is single storey, in my estimations the bulk and massing of the dwellings would be particularly prominent in the street scene when approached from the east along Westfield Road.
9. The appeal statement advises that the dwellings would be constructed to a very high level of energy efficiency, however I have no evidence to support this statement. I accept that the traditional design approach may reflect existing design features along Westfield Road. However, this fact alone does not outweigh the very clear harm that the proposal would cause to the character and appearance of the area and the street scene generally.
10. I therefore conclude on the first main issue, the proposal would result in material harm to the character and appearance of the area. It would therefore be in conflict with policies CS21 and CS24 of the CS outlined above. Reference has also been made to the SPD Woking's Landscape and Townscape, 2015. However, my attention has not been drawn to anything specific within this document.

*Whether the proposal would have an acceptable effect on the Thames Basins Heaths Special Protection Area (TBHSPA)*

11. Policy CS8 of the CS relates to the TBHSPA. It advises, amongst other things, that new residential development which is likely to have a significant effect on its purpose and integrity will be required to demonstrate that adequate mitigation measures are put into place. This policy is supported by the TBHSPA Avoidance Strategy 2010-2015. Although the appellant has identified a willingness to enter into such an agreement to address this requirement, I do

not have an executed Section 106 agreement before me to secure the appropriate payments.

12. Therefore, as matters stand, in the absence of any mechanism to secure the contribution, I must conclude that the development would have an unacceptable effect on the TBHSPA. Adequate provision has not been made to avoid or mitigate any adverse impacts upon the integrity of the European protected site in accordance with policy CS8 of the CS, the Avoidance Strategy and the duty under Regulations 61 and 62 of the Habitats Regulations<sup>1</sup>.

### **Conclusion**

13. To conclude, I have found that the proposal would cause material harm to the character and appearance of the area. There is also a significant policy conflict in respect of the effect of the scheme on the TBHSPA. For the reasons given above and having regard to all other matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

*Christa Masters*

INSPECTOR

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<sup>1</sup> SI 2010 No. 490 The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010