

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 26 September 2016

by H Butcher BSc (Hons) MSc MRTPI

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

Decision date: 25 October 2016

Appeal Ref: APP/R3650/W/16/3152555

St Anthony, Avenue Road, Cranleigh, Surrey, GU6 7LL

- 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 J Kopij against the decision of Waverley Borough Council.
 - The application Ref WA/2016/0704, dated 17 March 2016, was refused by notice dated 6 June 2016.
 - The development proposed is the demolition of existing house and construction of a replacement dwelling and garage.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Application for Costs

2. An application for costs was made by Mr J Kopij against Waverley Borough Council. This application is the subject of a separate Decision.

Main Issues

3. The main issues are the effect of the development on: (i) The character and appearance of the surrounding area, and; (ii) The living conditions of occupiers of neighbouring properties, having particular regard to outlook and light.

Reasons

Character and Appearance

4. St Anthony is a traditional detached bungalow. It sits at the end of a section of Avenue Road which is formed predominantly of detached houses of varying ages, sizes and styles, and which occupy relatively generously sized plots. To the west of the appeal site is Beechcroft which is a traditional detached dwelling. Beyond the appeal site to the east the road turns a corner and the character changes to that of a more homogenous residential development of closer knit properties dating from around the 1970s. The east side boundary of the site adjoins the rear boundaries of a number of these properties.
 5. The proposal before me is for the replacement of the existing bungalow with a two storey detached dwelling and detached garage. I note there is a previous permission on the site for extensions to the existing bungalow to create a two storey dwelling (ref WA/2014/2128). The proposal before me, however, is for a larger new two storey dwelling.
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6. The front elevation would be wide, incorporating two prominent front projections, and would fill the majority of the plot with a two storey built form. In addition to this, the proposed dwelling would have deep two storey side wings which would extend beyond the front and rear elevations of the neighbouring property Beechcroft. The combination of the dwelling's width and depth would result in an overly bulky building and the use of half hips on the side wings would do little to mitigate this. Furthermore, its prominent siting forward of Beechcroft would mean its bulky scale and form would be readily apparent in the street scene.
7. Whilst gaps would be retained to either side of the proposed dwelling from its side boundaries, these would be relatively modest, at just under 2m on the west side and approximately 2.3m on the east side, given its overall size. I note that, as a rule of thumb, the Council generally seek a 3m gap to the boundary from two storey buildings as set out in their Residential Extensions Supplementary Planning Document (2010), which I consider would be a reasonable standard to apply in the circumstances.
8. A detached double garage would be located forward of the proposed dwelling. Whilst this is not an unusual arrangement in the area, it would be set further forward than garages at Beechcroft and Patchways which would increase its prominence in the street scene. This matter further adds to my concerns above with respect to the overall visual impact of the development.
9. I accept that there are examples of larger modern replacement dwellings in the immediate vicinity of the appeal site. Some have been more successful than others in terms of their visual impact. Patchways, for example, on the other side of Beechcroft, is a recent and relatively large replacement dwelling. It is, however, set much further back from Avenue Road than Beechcroft which lessens its impact on the street scene. Its design also incorporates a cat slid type roof to one side giving it a less bulky appearance. Melford, adjacent to Patchways is similarly set further back than Beechcroft which again reduces the visual impact of this building.
10. Cranborne, however, on the opposite side of the road, does appear as a rather large and bulky addition to the street scene sitting in closer proximity to the road than the above properties and having two very prominent front gables. It is also a deep building requiring a flat crown which, given its siting, is clearly visible in the street scene. Cranborne, is therefore the exception rather than the rule, as far as replacement dwellings go in this section of Avenue Road, and does not justify allowing an overly bulky and dominant replacement dwelling at the appeal site.
11. Taking the above points together the replacement dwelling by reason of its overall size and scale, in conjunction with the prominent siting of both the dwelling and garage, would appear at odds with the layout and form of surrounding development. As such it would cause harm to the character and appearance of the area which would not be adequately mitigated by landscaping. The proposal would therefore conflict with Policies D1 and D4 of the Waverley Borough Local Plan 2002 (LP) which, amongst other things, seek to resist development which harms the visual character and distinctiveness of a locality, particularly in respect of its design and scale, and relationship to its surroundings.

Living Conditions

12. The replacement dwelling at Patchways, due to its height, siting and overall size, does, to a degree, create a sense of enclosure to a patio area to the rear of Beechcroft. The proposed replacement dwelling, with its deep two storey side wings, would be even closer to the shared boundary with Beechcroft, and Beechcroft itself, so its impact on the areas of garden to the side and immediately to the rear of Beechcroft would be acutely felt. It would therefore unacceptably enclose and bear down upon these areas which would be detrimental to the outlook of its occupiers.
13. I also noted on my site visit that a bedroom at Beechcroft looks onto the side of the existing dwelling 'St Anthony'. Presently this window faces towards the rear of St Anthony which, given its single storey nature, means this room currently enjoys a relatively open and unimpeded outlook. The proposal would dramatically change this introducing a tall two storey form directly opposite which would extend further to the rear of the site. As a result, the outlook from this habitable room would be significantly impeded, which further adds to my concerns in respect of outlook.
14. Taking the above points together, the proposed dwelling by reason of its size, proximity and siting would appear overly dominant and intrusive resulting in harm to the living conditions of occupiers of Beechcroft. It would therefore conflict with Policies D1 and D4 of the LP which aim to protect against any loss of general amenity for the occupiers of neighbouring properties such as a development having an overbearing appearance.
15. In coming to the above conclusions on living conditions, although I accept that occupiers of 55 and 57 Avenue Road, which back onto the side of the appeal site, would have an altered outlook as a result of the proposal, given the distances involved, and the fact that the development would not extend across the entire rear boundary of either of these properties, I find no material harm to the living conditions of their occupants. Nor do I find any significant loss of light to any of the neighbouring properties so as to amount to material harm. My findings in this respect do not, however, alter my conclusions above.
16. I understand that a previous application for a replacement dwelling was withdrawn and the proposal before me represents a revised scheme following discussions with the Council. Nevertheless, this does not override the harm I have found with respect to the proposed development, as set out above.

Conclusion

17. For the reasons given, the replacement dwelling would be harmful to the character and appearance of the surrounding area, and to the living conditions of occupiers of Beechcroft. It would therefore conflict with the relevant policies of the development plan. These policies are consistent with the National Planning Policy Framework, of which the core principles for planning include: Taking account of the character of different areas, and seeking a good standard of amenity for existing occupants of land and buildings. The proposed development would therefore not constitute sustainable development. Consequently, having had regard to all matters raised, the appeal is dismissed.

Hayley Butcher
INSPECTOR