
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 6 December 2016

by David Cliff BA Hons MSc MRTPI

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

Decision date: 18th January 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/Q3630/W/16/3155829

18 Ongar Place, Addlestone, Surrey KT15 1JF

- 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 Hillson Bruney and Mrs Suzanne Bruney against the decision of Runnymede Borough Council.
 - The application Ref RU.16/0539, dated 16 December 2015, was refused by notice dated 26 May 2016.
 - The development proposed is described in the application form as 'the erection of detached two storey dwelling with detached double garage within rear garden of No 18 Ongar Place with new access from Coombelands Lane'.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matter

2. Notwithstanding the description used on the planning application form (stated above), I note that the proposed development includes a single rather than double garage and the site includes land within the rear garden of No 16 Ongar Place. This is reflected in the description used in the Council's decision notice and on the appeal form. I have consequently considered the proposal on this basis.
3. Following the submission of the appeal, it has been confirmed that the appellants' names had been incorrectly stated on the appeal form. The appellants' names used in the banner heading above are those confirmed to be correct by the appellants' agent.

Main Issue

4. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development upon the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

5. The proposed dwelling would front on to Coombelands Lane and its front elevation would be positioned close to the front edge of the site. There is an existing dwelling which also fronts onto Coombelands Lane further to the west. However, this is the exception to the prevailing character and layout of existing development along the road.
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6. For the most part, this part of Coombelands Lane is characterised firstly by the rear gardens of the existing dwellings to the north. The landscaping on and adjacent to most of their rear boundaries creates an attractive green edge on this side of the road. Secondly, to the south there are existing residential properties fronting on to the road. Whilst these dwellings vary in their set back from the road, those opposite the appeal site are set back by a substantial distance.
7. The proposed dwelling would be sited close to the front boundary of the site with Coombelands Lane. In this location, its two storey design and overall massing would result in it appearing as particularly prominent within the street scene. In the context of the prevailing layout of surrounding development, I consider that it would appear as visually intrusive and incongruous in this location. Although there are other dwellings in the vicinity of the site of a similar or greater size, the proximity of the proposal from Coombelands Lane and its siting contrary to the prevailing pattern of development in the area are significant factors weighing against the proposal.
8. I noted at my site visit the existing dwelling 'Badgers Mount' at 1 Coombelands Lane. I am not aware of the particular circumstances relevant to its approval. However, although this is sited in proximity to the road edge, it is located nearer to the commercial buildings at the end of the road and is viewed in a different context to the more isolated siting of the appeal proposal further along the road. I have given this existing dwelling only limited weight.
9. I note that the gardens at 16 and 18 Ongar Place are larger than most others in the area. There are also a variety of other house designs in the locality and the proposed density of the scheme would not be excessive. Nevertheless, these factors do not negate the unacceptable adverse impact I have found would result from the siting and size of the proposed dwelling in the context of the surrounding area.
10. There would be some opportunity for new planting to the front of the proposed dwelling. However, given the limited available space and the proximity to its principal windows and front door, the scope for such planting would be restricted and would not satisfactorily mitigate against the harm I have identified.
11. Whilst the proposal would be located in fairly close proximity to an existing fir tree within the garden of 9 Bearwood Close, from the information before me I am not persuaded that it would be likely to be detrimentally affected. This does not however outweigh my overall findings in relation to the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area.
12. For the above reasons, the proposed development would result in significant harm to the character and appearance of the area. It would be contrary to the relevant design aims of policies HO9 and BE2 of the Runnymede Borough Local Plan Second Alteration 2001 and the National Planning Policy Framework.

Other matters

13. The proposal would make a small contribution to the supply of housing and would provide some limited economic benefits through the construction process. However, such benefits would not outweigh the harm I found to result upon the character and appearance of the area.

14. The site is located within the 5km protection zone of the Thames Basin Heath Special Protection Area (SPA) and therefore, based on the information provided, the proposal in combination with other development, has the potential to have a significant adverse effect on the integrity of the SPA through increased informal recreational use resulting from the increase in population.
15. A contribution towards SPA access management and monitoring has been sought by the Council through a unilateral undertaking which has been provided with the application. The Council has also suggested a condition requiring a SPA mitigation scheme to include provision for the delivery of Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG). From the information before me, I have some concerns regarding the workability of the suggested condition including how it would deliver the required mitigation. Furthermore, the Planning Practice Guidance¹ states that conditions requiring obligations or other agreements are unlikely to be appropriate in the majority of cases, although may be used in exceptional circumstances in the case of more complex and strategically important development where there is clear evidence that the delivery of the development would otherwise be at serious risk. However, in this instance this matter does not need to be considered further in view of my conclusions on the main issue.

Conclusion

16. Having taken account of all material considerations and having had regard to all other matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

David Cliff

INSPECTOR

¹ Reference ID: 21a-010-20140306