

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 22 December 2016

by AJ Steen BA (Hons) DipTP MRTPI

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

Decision date: 20 January 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/R3650/W/16/3159132

Dolphin Cottage, Dunsfold Road, Alfold, Surrey GU6 8JB

- 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 Mrs A R Murray against the decision of Waverley Borough Council.
 - The application Ref WA/2016/0680, dated 1 March 2016, was refused by notice dated 14 July 2016.
 - The development proposed is alterations and extension to form four one bedroom flats together with associated external works.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are:
 - the effect of the proposed alterations and extension on the living conditions of neighbouring occupiers of dwellings to the west with particular regard to privacy; and
 - the effect of the proposed alterations, extension and external works to form four flats on the character and appearance of the existing building and surrounding area.

Reasons

Living conditions

3. The proposal would raise the eaves over part of the building, and provide a small two storey extension, on the side of the building that faces toward the rear of 10 Dunsfold Road and its attached neighbour. These properties front an open green area, with their rear elevations, private gardens and parking areas on the side closest to Dolphin Cottage, separated by a narrow access drive and the modest front garden of Dolphin Cottage. Their rear boundary is formed by a hedge that ensures views are not possible into their gardens from the ground floor of Dolphin Cottage and the access drive.
 4. The proposed extension would incorporate a number of first floor windows that would serve two kitchens and sitting rooms of the proposed first floor flats. These would replace a single, low level window that serves a bedroom of the existing property. Given their proximity, height above the boundary hedge of
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the neighbouring property and angle of view toward 10 Dunsfold Road and its attached neighbour, the proposed windows would significantly increase the amount of overlooking from the building toward the private rear windows and garden areas of 10 Dunsfold Road and the attached neighbouring property.

5. For these reasons, I conclude that the alterations and conversion of Dolphin Cottage to form four flats would result in a significant reduction in privacy to the occupiers of neighbouring properties to the west that would harm their living conditions. As such, I conclude that the proposed development would be contrary to Policies D1 and D4 of the Waverley Borough Local Plan (LP) and the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) seek to ensure development does not result in material detriment to the environment and be of high quality design, including protecting the privacy of occupiers of neighbouring development.

Character and appearance

6. Dolphin Cottage is located within Alfold, on the junction of Dunsfold Road and an access drive that leads to a number of other properties and parking areas to the rear of houses fronting Dunsfold Road and the A281. Surrounding development comprises predominantly two storey houses of a variety of styles, including recent residential development adjacent to the existing property. The existing building is surrounded by hard surfaces that provide parking and garden area, with a hedge between the house and the access drive, although not extending beyond the house to front or rear.
7. The proposal would extend and subdivide the existing property to provide a two storey building comprising four flats. The extension would be to the side of the property with two gable ends facing toward the access drive and reflecting the design and appearance of the existing building.
8. Parking would be provided to the flats along the access route, with five spaces provided, three at right angles to the access and two directly outside the building and parallel to the access. Planting is shown on the plans to the front of the building and around the two parallel parking spaces that would soften the development.
9. Although the amount of parking proposed would indicate that the building would be subdivided into flats, this would not significantly alter the existing situation with large area of hard standing to the rear that could be used for parking. Much of that parking would no longer be available for that purpose and more landscaping is provided to the front and side of the resulting building. The design of the proposed building with two front doors shared by the four flats means that it would not be evident that the building had been subdivided in this way.
10. For these reasons, I conclude that the proposed alterations and extensions to the property would reflect the character and appearance of the building and surrounding area. As such, the proposed development would comply with Policies D1 and D4 of the LP and the Framework that seek to protect the character and distinctiveness of the locality and be appropriate to the site in terms of the scale, height, form and appearance.

Other matters

11. Car and bicycle parking is provided on the site and public transport is available in the vicinity of the site that provides alternative forms of transport. I note that the proposed development would result in additional dwellings on previously developed land, but the Council have confirmed that they have a five year supply of housing land. Consequently, these matters are not sufficient to overcome the harm that I have found to the living conditions of neighbouring occupiers.
12. Reference is made in the appeal documents to the three strands of sustainability referred to in the Framework, being economic, social and environmental. In this case, there would be limited economic benefits during the construction of the flats and residents would support local services once they are occupied. The provision of four flats would have a positive social impact in contributing in a small way to the need for, and mix of, homes in the area. However, the environmental harm arising from the impact on the living conditions of neighbouring occupiers would outweigh these minor positive benefits

Conclusion

13. For the above reasons and taking into account all other matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

AJ Steen

INSPECTOR