

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 4 January 2017

by J C Clarke BSc(Hons) BTP MRTPI

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

Decision date: 24 January 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/L3625/W/16/3159472

Ashdown, 29 Wray Common Road, Reigate RH2 0ND

- 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 Madeleine Rijndorp against the decision of Reigate & Banstead Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 16/01115/F, dated 4 May 2016, was refused by notice dated 22 August 2016.
 - The development proposed is described as 'Erection of a replacement dwelling and integral garage; revised application further to 14/01737/F'.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matters

2. My site visit was originally arranged as an Access Required Site Visit. As the Appellant was not present when I visited I was unable to inspect the site from within its boundaries. However, I was able to see all that I needed to from the public highway. I therefore undertook the visit on an unaccompanied basis and have determined the appeal accordingly.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is whether the proposed development would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Wray Common Conservation Area (the 'WCCA').

Reasons

4. As required by Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, I have paid special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the WCCA. In accordance with paragraph 132 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the 'Framework') I have given great weight to this matter.
 5. The WCCA contains buildings of a wide variety of ages and styles, including some from the Victorian period. The Area is focussed around the large and expansive open space of Wray Common. The buildings alongside the residential roads which run off the Common, including Wray Common Road, are also varied in their age, form and scale. The area has a spacious and verdant character.
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6. The appeal property forms the middle of a line of 3 bungalows, identified as dating from the 1950s. The three dwellings each have a style which is typical of this period, including prominent hipped and ridged roofs and are orientated on a regular, staggered pattern. Although the 3 bungalows are detached from each other, due to the consistent themes in their massing and design they clearly read as a group within the street scene. Whilst the sense of space within Wray Common Road and neighbouring roads is derived largely from the size of the gardens in the properties, the low lying, hipped roof form of the appeal dwelling and its two immediate neighbours also plays a role in this regard.
7. The appeal site and neighbouring properties are close to the southern edge of the WCCA. However, it is likely that the WCCA was designated after the built form in this part of the area now covered by the WCCA was substantially established. The 3 bungalows including the appeal dwelling contribute positively, albeit to a modest extent, to the character and appearance of the WCCA as a whole.
8. Under the appeal proposal, the existing dwelling at number 29 would be replaced by a 2 storey house. The front elevation of the new building would be set back considerably from the highway on a similar alignment to the existing building. The proposal would not lead to any substantive loss of the spacious garden and planting at the front of the dwelling, and additions could be made to the planting. Its maximum roof height would be similar to that of the existing dwelling and of the bungalows to either side. It would also be slightly narrower than the total width of existing buildings within the site. Gaps would be retained on either side of the building, and its first floor would be set in further than its ground floor from the boundaries on either side. Its materials could be required by condition to match or closely resemble those used in the neighbouring bungalows.
9. However, the new building would also cover a notably deeper footprint than the existing building. Furthermore, due to the width (across the plot) and depth (from front to rear) of its first floor it would form a much more bulky feature within the street scene. This effect would be exacerbated by the fact that its first floor eaves would be substantially above those of its two neighbours. Its long stretches of brickwork and roofing on its side elevations would be apparent in views from the surrounding area. The broad consistency of form and massing of the existing bungalow alongside that of the two neighbouring bungalows would be lost. Whilst the new building would have an un-fussy, modern design, it would lack distinctiveness to counteract these harmful effects.
10. The area, including this part of the WCCA, contains a number of large buildings. However, whilst some of these have bland design features, others have attractive period detailing which breaks up their impact. The existence of these large buildings does not convince me that harm would not arise from the appeal proposal.
11. The proposed building would have a less overtly modern design, for example as it would include less glazing, than the proposal which was subject to appeal decision APP/L3625/A/14/2229010. I also acknowledge that the Inspector's concerns in relation to that scheme were not necessarily with the fact that the building would have two storeys. However, I am also not convinced that the

current proposal has adequately addressed that Inspector's concerns regarding the bulk and appearance of the building.

12. I also acknowledge that the scheme subject to planning permission (15/02394/HHOLD) could be implemented and would enlarge the appeal dwelling at first floor level. However, the roof form of that proposal would relate more strongly than that within the appeal proposal to the hipped roofs of the bungalows to either side. Unlike the appeal proposal that approved scheme would also retain a single eaves line, at a similar level to the existing eaves line, which would also help it to integrate with its neighbours.
13. I conclude that the proposal would cause harm, albeit of a less than substantial nature, to the character and appearance of the WCCA. Under paragraph 134 of the Framework, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.
14. By enabling a 3 bedroom house to be created to replace the current 2 bedroom bungalow, the proposal would make the property more suitable for occupation by a family. However, it is not clear that this would be more beneficial than the existing bungalow in meeting the housing needs of the area. In any event, I am not convinced that this benefit would outweigh the harm that would be caused to the WCCA.
15. The proposal would not materially harm the living conditions of occupiers of neighbouring dwellings, parking provision or highway safety, or tree coverage in the area. However, these points constitute a lack of harm in relation to these matters rather than public benefits to weigh in the balance. No other substantive public benefits of the proposal have been drawn to my attention.
16. As the proposal would cause harm to the character and appearance of the WCCA which would not be outweighed by its public benefits, its approval would conflict with the relevant provisions of Policies Ho9, Ho13, Ho16 and Pc13 of the Reigate and Banstead Local Plan 2005 and of the Framework. Allowing the appeal would also be inconsistent with my statutory duties under Section 72(1).
17. The negative outcome of the balancing exercise under paragraph 134 of the Framework means that, under the last part of bullet point 4 in paragraph 14 of the Framework, development should be restricted. Whilst the proposal could bring positive economic and social effects, the harm that it would cause to a designated heritage asset (the WCCA) means that it would not contribute positively to the environmental role of sustainable development, or constitute sustainable development as a whole.

Conclusions

18. I have found that the proposal would cause harm to the character and appearance of the WCCA which would not be outweighed by its public benefits. I therefore dismiss the appeal.

Jonathan Clarke

INSPECTOR