
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 16 January, 2017

by Nicola Davies BA DipTP MRTPI

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

Decision date: 27th January, 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/M3645/W/16/3160229

8 Harestone Lane, Caterham, CR3 6BD

- 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 Adrian Cox against the decision of Tandridge District Council.
 - The application Ref TA/2016/941, dated 26 May, 2016 was refused by notice dated 22 July, 2016.
 - The development proposed is the erection of a new 3-bed dwelling with associated access and landscaping on land accessed from Harestone Lane.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue raised in respect of the appeal is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

3. The area is residential in character and is situated upon the side of a sloping valley. The properties in Harestone Lane, in the main, are dwellings that front onto the highway, are set back behind front gardens and are of mixed design styles. Nos 52 and 54 Underwood Road, to the north of the appeal site, are uncharacteristically positioned along an access road behind No 50. Whilst the development further to the north is set within smaller plots, the properties in the immediate vicinity of the appeal site have large rear gardens. The rear gardens host some low key outbuildings, trees and landscaping which gives the area behind road frontage development an open verdant feel and a spaciousness that is a key characteristic of the area.
 4. Policy DP8 Part A of the Tandridge Local Plan (the Local Plan) requires back land development to maintain the character and appearance of the area. Part B of this Policy indicates that tandem development of residential garden land will normally be resisted. Whilst the proposed dwelling would be set in line with Nos 52 and 54 Underwood Road, the proposed development would be positioned behind, and in tandem with, No 8 Harestone Lane.
 5. Both parties refer me to the Harestone Valley Design Guide. Design Principle L4 of this Guide advises that development must respect its location, the size of the site and the character of the area. The openness and undeveloped nature of the landscaped rear gardens, as noted above, is a key characteristic of the area. Removing the open gap between Nos 8 and 54 and introducing built
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development by continuing the building form adjacent No 54 would have a consolidating urbanising effect harmful to the open character and appearance of this area. I consider the proposed development would be out of keeping with the prevailing character of the area. Although this harm would be limited to glimpsed views from surrounding highways and wider viewpoints, it would nonetheless be clearly visible to adjoining occupiers.

6. The sub-division of the garden of No 8 has already taken place and has created two plots smaller in size than those within the surrounding area. The footprint of the proposed dwelling is that of the basement and I acknowledge the basement would be recessed into the topography of the site.
7. The applicant's statement indicates that the materials and design of the dwelling are intended to blend into the landscape of the appeal site. Whilst the scheme would incorporate garden areas and appear to be single-storey from some view points at ground floor level with separation to the side boundaries of the site, the basement would have a disproportionately large footprint when compared to the size of the plot and would be constructed up to the southern boundary of the site. This footprint would not reflect that of adjoining existing dwellings in the vicinity of the appeal site that have space at the side boundaries and larger front and rear gardens. As a result the proposal would have a comparatively cramped appearance within this modest plot.
8. Whilst a landscaping scheme, incorporating tree planting, and the provision of an integral garage that would conceal vehicles at the site, would soften the appearance of the development, these benefits would not overcome the harm that I have identified above.
9. For the above reasons I conclude that the proposal would be harmful to the character and appearance of the area. The proposed development would be contrary to Policy CSP18 of the Tandridge District Core Strategy and Policies DP7 and DP8 of the Local Plan which resist tandem development and that seek new development to respect the character, setting and local context, and be appropriate to the surrounding area in terms of size and scale, amongst other matters.

Other Matters

10. It is acknowledged that the appeal site is in a sustainable location in the urban area and would make efficient use of land. It would also be a self-build project and provide a bespoke high quality energy efficient family sized dwelling of innovative design that would make a modest contribution to the demand for housing in the South East which is constrained by the Green Belt. It is also considered acceptable to the Council in respect of the living conditions of adjoining occupiers. Notwithstanding the enhanced landscaping and tree planting that would improve biodiversity at the appeal site, these economic and social benefits would not outweigh the environmental harm that I have identified above in terms of the character and appearance of the area when assessed against the Framework as a whole.

Conclusions

11. For the reasons given above, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Nicola Davies INSPECTOR