

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 24 January 2017

by Lynne Evans BA MA MRTPI MRICS

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

Decision date: 6 February 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/C3620/D/16/3164327

4 St Pauls Road East, Dorking, Surrey RH4 2HR

- 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 Iain McKillop against the decision of Mole Valley District Council.
 - The application Ref: MO/2016/0930/PLAH dated 8 June 2016, was refused by notice dated 13 October 2016.
 - The development proposed is side/rear extension to existing detached house, with raised patio to rear.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. I understand that the plans were revised during the application process, and my decision is based on the amended plans which were determined by the Council.

Main Issues

3. The main issues in this appeal are:
 - a) the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the existing property and on the local area, and
 - b) the effect of the proposal on the living conditions of the adjoining neighbours.

Reasons

Issue a) Character and Appearance

4. The appeal property is a detached dwelling on the north side of St. Pauls Road and set within a generous plot within a predominantly residential area. There are a variety of mainly detached dwellings in the vicinity of the appeal site, but the overall character and appearance of the local area is of well spaced dwellings on good sized and verdant plots. St Pauls Road East slopes up away from the junction with Chart Lane so that the appeal site is at a higher level than its neighbour at No. 2 which is set at an angle within its plot, which extends to Chart Lane.
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5. The appeal property has an existing detached garage along the boundary with No 2, with an outbuilding behind, and there is a garage at No 2 adjoining the boundary with the appeal site.
6. The proposed extensions to the property would wrap around both sides and to the rear over two storeys. I have taken into account that the side extensions would be set back from the front elevation and set down from the main roof slope to try and reduce their bulk and massing. However, the proposed extensions would add substantially to the footprint and scale of the existing dwelling, particularly on its eastern side. Although I have noted the attempts to break down the massing of the side extension on the eastern side, its irregular shape and massing would result in a very bulky addition that would be out of scale and character with the more traditional and rectangular form and massing of the existing house.
7. The extended property would leave modest open margins to both side boundaries. Both the Council and the Appellant have referred to the guidance in the Council's adopted Supplementary Planning Guidance: Design Guidance for House Extensions which indicates that two storey extensions should normally be a least 1 m away from a side boundary. However, the guidance recognises that the distance required to the side boundary is dependent on the spacing of the existing properties. I have already noted the predominant character of well-spaced dwellings in this locality. The Appellant has drawn my attention to a small number of examples in the vicinity of the appeal site where there is development in close proximity to an adjoining property. However, this small number of examples does not, in my view, detract from the predominant and distinctive character and appearance of the local area of well spaced dwellings in verdant plots.
8. Whilst the existing detached garage and outbuilding behind are sited close to the eastern boundary, their small scale and detached form maintain a sense of openness and a visual break between the two storey built form of the neighbouring houses. By contrast and notwithstanding the set back and roof forms employed, the proposed development would extend the footprint and massing of the main house very close to the side boundaries. It is my view that the proposed bulk and massing of the extensions would result in an overdevelopment of the plot by reducing the open margins to the side boundaries and through the extended width and bulk of development.
9. The extended property, as a result of its increased footprint across the width of the plot and its bulk and massing, would become visually over prominent in the street scene, particularly when approaching along St Pauls Road East from the junction with Chart Lane.
10. I therefore conclude that the proposed development would harm the character and appearance of the existing property and of the local area. This would conflict with Policy CS14 of the adopted Mole Valley Core Strategy (Core Strategy) and Policies ENV22 and ENV32 of the adopted Mole Valley Local Plan (Local Plan) as well as the National Planning Policy Framework (Framework), all of which seek a high standard of design which respects the local context and local distinctiveness.

11. The Appellant has calculated that due to the generous plot size, some 80% of the plot would remain undeveloped but this arithmetic calculation, taken on its own, does not address the relationship of the proposed development with the surrounding development and the resultant effect on character and appearance. It does not therefore persuade me to a different conclusion on this issue.

Issue b) Living Conditions

12. The adjoining dwelling at No 2 is set at a lower level than the appeal property and is set back, and at an angle, within its plot close to the common boundary with the appeal property. There is disagreement between the Council and the Appellant regarding the number of windows serving habitable rooms in the elevation facing towards the proposed extension, with the Council referring to several and the Appellant to one. However, I do not agree with the Appellant's conclusion that the outlook from the one window serving a habitable room on this elevation, which he has identified, would not be affected. I consider that the solid mass of the two storey extension in close proximity and set at a higher level would be overbearing and would materially harm the outlook from that room.
13. I recognise that many of the rooms at No 2 face away from the appeal property and that the smaller area of outside space closest to the appeal property appears currently not to be used as a principal amenity area, but if permitted and built, the effect of the proposed development would exist for future occupiers. I consider as a result of its scale and proximity as well as the change in levels, the proposed development would be oppressive in terms of the outlook for the neighbours at No 2 when at the rear of their property.
14. I therefore conclude that the development would harm the living conditions of the neighbours at No 2 St Pauls Road East through loss of outlook. This would conflict with Policies ENV22 and ENV32 of the Local Plan and one of the Core Planning Principles of the Framework, all of which seek to protect the residential amenities of existing and future occupiers.
15. The adjoining property along Chart Lane, Bradley Mead has a number of windows in its rear elevation facing towards the appeal site. I have taken into account the change in levels between the appeal property and Bradley Mead. However, although these neighbours would be aware of the proposed extension from some of their windows and from parts of their rear garden, the principal outlook would remain towards the rear garden of the appeal property, with more oblique views of the proposed extension. I do not consider that these neighbours would be materially affected in terms of loss of outlook.
16. The property at No 6 St Pauls Road East, on the western side of the appeal property, is set at a higher level. Although built development would be brought closer to the common boundary, I do not consider that the scale of the extension, taking into account the set back and roof design would materially affect these neighbours in terms of outlook and light.
17. However, my findings in respect of the neighbours at No 6 and at Bradley Mead do not outweigh the harm I have already concluded to the living conditions of the neighbours at No 2.

Other Considerations and Conclusion

18.I have noted that the proposals would provide improved accommodation for the Appellant, and the Appellant has referred to potential opportunities to restore or enhance biodiversity, but these considerations and benefits do not outweigh the harm I have concluded.

19.For the reasons given above and having regard to all other matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

L J Evans

INSPECTOR