
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 5 January 2017

by Jonathon Parsons MSc BSc(Hons) DipTP Cert(Urb) MRTPI

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

Decision date: 23 February 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/M3645/W/16/3159265

Brookfield, Station Road, Woldingham, Surrey CR3 7DD

- 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 & Mrs Richard Cowin against the decision of Tandridge District Council.
 - The application Ref TA/2016/197, dated 18 February 2015, was refused by notice dated 30 March 2016.
 - The development proposed is the erection of a single 5 bedroom dwelling house and detached double garage on land adjacent to Brookfield.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are the effects of the proposal on (a) the character and appearance of the area and (b) the living conditions of future residents, having regard to the provision of private outdoor space.

Reasons

Character and appearance

3. The appeal site comprises the side garden of a two storey dwelling on Station Road. The plot slopes upwards towards the existing dwelling and downwards to the rear, where the ground level falls away sharply. Along this part of Station Road, dwellings are varied in design but they are set within spacious, sloping and sylvan plots.
 4. Within the Woldingham Design Guidance (DG) 2011, the appeal site lies within the Western Hillside (Character Area C). The DG indicates that houses are accessed off a road that winds along the contours and through characteristic tree planting, and that houses are set well within their plots with many of them hardly visible from the road. It further indicates the area has a consistent plot rhythm where original and historic plot sizes remains. From what I saw on my site visit, this would accord with the character and appearance that I have identified and confirms the locally distinctive qualities of the area.
 5. The proposed dwelling would only have its first floor visible from the street and its conventional housing design would be in keeping with the varied designs in the area. However, the proposal would result in the subdivision of a plot into two much smaller plots on a part of Station Road where the majority of plots
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on both sides of the road would be larger. Consequently, the subdivision of the plot would harm the consistency of the existing character in conflict with the advice of the DG on this matter. In identifying this adverse impact, the context of the appeal site has been considered on the basis of the present situation, which may include sub-divided plots created before recent policy changes.

6. The proposal would also result in a considerable reduction of an existing plot width and the frontage plot width of the new dwelling being considerably narrower than most of the plots on both sides of Station Road in the surrounding area. In this regard, there would be two dwellings, Benayr and Long Dawkhams, with plot widths roughly equivalent to the new dwelling's plot width. However, they are an exception to the majority of plots in the surrounding area on Station Road which are considerably greater in width. Thus, the new plot would appear markedly small in width within this context.
7. The resulting plots would also have substantial areas of hardstanding which, in addition to the existing and proposed dwellings, would contribute to an impression of significant overdevelopment of the site. The existing and new dwelling would result in a reduced plot to building footprint ratios. In this regard, the proposal would be a more intensive form of development than that indicated by the average ratios within the Western Hillside (Character C) of the DG. Nevertheless, plot/building footprint ratios can only be a guide to the impact of the development as the DG indicates.
8. In summary, the impacts of plot sizes and widths, along with the extent of development on the two plots, would result in harm to the character and appearance of the surrounding area. Accordingly, the proposal would be contrary to policy CSP18 of the Tandridge Core Strategy Development Plan Document (DPD) 2008 and policies DP7 and DP8 of the Tandridge Local Plan Part 2 Detailed Policies (LP) 2014, policies L1 and L2 of the Woldingham Neighbourhood Plan (NP), which collectively and amongst other matters, require the development to reflect and respect existing character, setting and local context, to not result in inappropriate sub-division of existing curtilage to a size below that prevailing in the area, to not result in plot sizes less than 0.2 ha and to retain frontage widths of a size prevailing in the area.
9. The Appellant has argued that NP policy L1, part 5, undermines the strategic policy objectives of the LP where it requires plot sizes to be not less than 0.2 ha. Notwithstanding that the NP has been through a formal examination and made process, I have found that proposal harms the character and appearance of the surrounding area in any case conflicting with LP policies and so I have found no evidence of this. Additionally, the proposal would be contrary to the advice of the DS because the form of the development would not be appropriate to its location due to adverse impact identified. For similar reasons, there would be a conflict with the advice of Woldingham Village Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document 2011 because the proposal would not protect and enhance the high quality character of the area.

Living conditions

10. Both Brookfield and the new dwelling would be expected to accommodate families by reason of their size and the resultant sub-division would result in rear private outdoor spaces on land that slopes away steeply. However, the new dwelling would have level space areas to the side and rear in the form of a terrace whilst Brookfields would have similarly sized and level areas to the side

and rear. Although not overly great in extent, such areas would be sufficient for the normal everyday requirements of residents, such as children's play space, sitting out and clothes drying.

11. Therefore, the development would not harm the living conditions of the future residents of the dwelling or those of Brookfields. Accordingly, the proposal would comply with policy CSP18 of DPD and policy DP7 of the LP, which collectively and amongst other matters, requires development to provide a satisfactory environment for the occupiers of both the existing and new development, and to respect the amenity of neighbouring occupiers.

Other matters

12. The appeal scheme would bring economic benefits, delivering and supporting jobs on and off the site. The scheme would contribute to housing supply providing a dwelling for present and future generations. It would create a dwelling with reasonable access to public transport and local shopping facilities. The proposal would utilise renewable energy resources. There is a dispute as to whether the Council has a 5 year deliverable housing land supply. However, even if I were to conclude there is a shortfall in this of the scale suggested by the Appellant and that relevant policies for the supply of housing should not be considered up-to-date, the adverse impacts of granting permission would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits. In this respect, there would be a significant impact on the distinctive character and appearance of the site and this part of Woldingham and the benefits of the scheme would be limited by reason of one dwelling being created. It is thus not sustainable development.
13. My attention has been drawn to an allowed appeal for a dwelling at Whiteoaks where an Inspector accepted a lower plot size than 0.2ha in conflict with a previous development plan policy. However, the appeal plot was comparable in size to neighbouring plots. In a 2008 planning permission for a dwelling in Nethern Court Road, development was similarly justified on the basis of the plot's width and size being similar to surrounding properties. In an appeal decision at Cedar Cottage, an Inspector considered that the dwelling was not cramped by reason of the substantial garden sizes of neighbouring properties. However, this proposal was for a replacement dwelling and was dismissed on the grounds of its overly assertive nature due to massing close to the road. What these and other cases show is that each case has to be considered on its particular planning merits and different conclusions based on individual circumstances will vary from site to site.

Conclusion

14. Having regard to the above and to all other matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Jonathon Parsons

INSPECTOR