
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 4 April 2017

by Alex Hutson MATP CMLI MArborA

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

Decision date: 4 May 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/L3625/W/16/3160054
2 Blanford Road, Reigate RH2 7DR

- 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 Newcourt Residential against the decision of Reigate & Banstead Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 16/01393/F, dated 9 June 2016, was refused by notice dated 25 August 2016.
 - The development proposed is Demolition of existing dwelling and the development of 10no. new apartments with associated car parking, landscaping and associated works.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary matter

2. One of the reasons for refusal set out on the Council's decision notice relates to a lack of a contribution towards affordable housing provision in the Borough. However, following recent Government advice, the Council has confirmed that they wish to withdraw this reason for refusal. It is therefore not necessary for me to consider this matter any further and I have determined the appeal on this basis.

Main issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

4. The appeal site comprises a large, detached, two storey dwelling with rooms in the roof and its associated front, side and rear garden. It is located on the corner of Blanford Road and Crackell Road within a wider residential area which dates back to the Edwardian period. Large plots have, over time, been subdivided and Blanford Road has seen a number of infill and flatted block developments come forward. As such, Blanford Road comprises dwellings of a varied appearance and of a mix of size and age. Nevertheless, dwellings, many of which are large and imposing properties, tend to be 2-2.5 storeys in height, traditional in appearance, set back a generous degree from the street frontage and display a mature landscape setting. These factors contribute positively to the character and appearance of the streetscape and area. The existing dwelling on the appeal site is in general conformity with these characteristics.
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5. The proposal seeks to demolish the existing dwelling and to replace it with a building containing 10 flats with associated car parking to the rear. I acknowledge that the proposed building would be traditional in appearance and that the materials it would be constructed from would reflect those used in the construction of other buildings in the area. It would maintain the same front building line as the existing dwelling and would maintain a generous level of side spacing. Moreover, many landscape features within the appeal site which add to the verdant qualities of the area, such as trees and hedges, would be retained. I note that the ridge of the proposed building would be lower in height than the ridge of the adjacent flatted development, St Augustine's Court¹. In addition, the width of the proposed building would be similar to the width of this property. I also recognise that the appellant has sought to create visual interest and to reflect some features of other dwellings in the area by incorporating a large timber framed front gable, a large porch, an oriel window, chimney features and an offset symmetrical facade. Furthermore, I accept that the use of dormers, varying ridge heights and roof forms can break up and create interesting elevations.
6. However, the proposed building would be considerably greater in depth than the existing dwelling and many other dwellings in the area. Whilst this is also true of St Augustine's Court, this building is arranged in a T-shape which helps to break up and reduce its overall visual bulk and massing. Though the proposed building would step in along its western elevation, its eastern elevation would largely appear as a continuous mass of unbroken built form. This would be noticeable in views from along Blanford Road to the east of the appeal site. In addition, the western and rear elevations would appear as 3 storeys and would therefore fail to follow through the 2.5 storey approach to the front and eastern elevations and would fail to reflect the prevailing 2-2.5 storey appearance of other dwellings in the area. This would be apparent in views from along Crackell Road, including from the junction with Blanford Road, despite the presence of vegetation around the boundaries of and within the appeal site.
7. As such, the overall bulk and massing of the proposed building would appear excessive and at considerable odds with the bulk and massing of other buildings in the area. This would result in an overly prominent and dominant form of development that would fail to reflect the prevailing pattern of development in the area. Consequently, it would result in significant harm to the character and appearance of the streetscape and area. This is notwithstanding that the appeal site is not subject to any specific landscape or heritage designations.
8. The proposal would therefore be contrary to Policies CS1: Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development, CS4: Valued Townscapes and the Historic Environment and CS10: Sustainable Development, of the Reigate and Banstead Local Plan: Core Strategy 2014; and saved Policies Ho9, Ho13 and Ho16 of the Reigate and Banstead Borough Local Plan 2005. These policies require, amongst other things, development to be of a high quality design that respects local character and distinctiveness, to conform to the pattern of development in the surrounding area and to improve the environmental conditions in the area. These policies are consistent with the broad aims and objectives of the National

¹ Allowed on appeal Ref APP/L3625/A/02/1102437

Planning Policy Framework which seek planning to secure high quality design and to take account of the different roles and character of different areas.

9. The proposal would also be contrary to the guidance of the Reigate and Banstead Local Distinctiveness Design Guide 2004 which advises that development should respond to and enhance local distinctiveness.

Other matters

10. The Council raises no specific concerns in respect of the effect of the proposal on protected species. However, the submitted Ecological Appraisal confirms the presence of a bat roost within the existing dwelling. It recommends that further surveys should be carried out to determine appropriate mitigation measures. Nonetheless, no such survey information appears to have been provided and as such, it is unclear whether these have taken place. Moreover, no detailed mitigation measures have been proposed. Consequently, the proposal is likely to result in significant harm to bats, which are a species protected by law. This adds considerable weight to my decision to dismiss the appeal.
11. The proposal would occupy a location with a good level of access to local services, facilities and public transport routes for any future occupiers. It would make a useful contribution, albeit in the wider scheme of things, a modest one, to housing supply in the Borough. It would generate some additional Council Tax and Community Infrastructure Levy payments to the Council. I also acknowledge that it would be built to high energy efficiency standards and would utilise sustainable construction techniques. However, these benefits, individually or cumulatively, would not be sufficient to outweigh the harm I have identified.
12. The appellant has raised some concerns over the Council's procedures in dealing with the original planning application. Nevertheless, this is not a matter for my consideration in an appeal under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

Conclusion

13. For the reasons set out above and having regard to all other matters, including parking, highway safety, privacy, outlook, trees, noise and disturbance, flood risk, amenity space provision, the setting of locally listed buildings and property devaluation, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Alex Hutson

INSPECTOR