
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 8 May 2017

by Claire Searson MSc PGDip BSc (Hons) MRTPI IHBC

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

Decision date: 23rd May 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/R3650/W/17/3168214

4 Wey Hill, Haslemere, Surry, GU27 1BX

- 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 Ledbury Estates Ltd against the decision of Waverley Borough Council.
 - The application Ref WA/2016/0086, dated 22 December 2015, was refused by notice dated 24 November 2016.
 - The development proposed is described as "the erection of 4 dwellings (as amended by plans received 04/05/2016, 19/05/2016 and 24/06/2016 and additional information received 12/10/2016). Land at 4 Wey Hill, Haslemere."
-

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matters

2. The number of units proposed was amended during the course of the original application. I have therefore taken the description of the development from the Decision Notice and the submitted appeal form which reflects these changes.
3. My attention has been drawn to the emerging Local Plan which was submitted for examination in December 2016. However, as far as I am aware this remains unexamined and un-adopted and as such the weight I can attach to this is limited.

Main Issue

4. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

5. The appeal site is located in a corner plot on Wey Hill and Weydown Road. To the front of the site is the former Crown and Cushion Pub, a 2-storey detached building which has been converted into residential apartments. The appeal site forms an open area of land which is currently used for amenity space for the flats and parking. To the rear of the site is an industrial building. To the east the site is bounded by a dense hedgerow and trees which line a stream. To the west is residential development which runs along Wey Hill and comprises of terraced, detached and semi-detached dwellings of different scales and sizes.
 6. I am satisfied that the principle of the development of the site for residential would be consistent with the residential dwellings along Wey Hill. However, the
-

- proposed layout is as such that the dwellings located to the rear of the sites (plots 2-4) would appear crowded in respect of the size of the site.
7. This would be due to the built form of these dwellings with plot 4 as a detached dwelling with plots 2 & 3 as a pair of semi-detached dwellings. While the area has a mixed and built up character, typically such dwelling types benefit from a more generous plot size. As such the proposed development would be incongruous in this regard. This effect is also compounded by the presence of the industrial building to the rear. The layout and proximity of these dwellings to this unit would reinforce the cramped nature of the site.
 8. The rear plots would be partially screened from Wey Hill by the design of the development at plot 1 to the site frontage as well as established vegetation to the side boundary. Nonetheless, some visibility would be gauged from nearby footpaths and from the road and I am also mindful that the screening would be reduced in the winter months when this is not in leaf. The cramped effect I have identified would therefore be experienced from the street scene.
 9. While I note that the nearby Marston Lodge site (ref WA/2016/0654) has a much higher density, this is flatted accommodation in a single block which would be 3-storey in height. This scheme is therefore materially different to the built form of the appeal proposal before me which I have determined based on its own merits.
 10. I also note that all gardens are north facing along this side of Wey Hill, and this factor in itself would not cause harm to character and appearance. This does not, however, alter my findings above.
 11. I therefore conclude that the development would cause harm to the character and appearance of the area. This would be in conflict to saved Policies D1 and D4 of the Waverley Borough Local Plan 2002 (LP). These policies require that development integrates well with the site and complements its surroundings. Development will not be permitted where there would be harm to the visual character and distinctiveness of a locality, particularly in respect of the design and scale of the development and its relationship to its surroundings.

Other Matters

12. As evidenced by the submitted transcript, I note that Members were concerned in respect of internal space standards and in respect of amenity space for plot 1. I consider this to be a separate specific matter to the cramped appearance of the proposals and I note that the application was not refused on the basis of living conditions of future occupants.
13. To address such concerns, amended plans were submitted as part of the appeal in respect of an amended layout and the provision of garden space for flat 1 (ref 14.010.01 Rev M) as well as plans showing amended internal layouts to meet the space standards for master bedrooms for plots 2 and 3 (Ref 14.010.06 Rev F) and plot 4 (ref 14.010.07 Rev D). The appellant makes clear in their submissions that these should be considered should I be minded to agree that they are necessary.
14. If the circumstances leading to a grant of permission had been present, in light of the above, I would have been required to give further consideration in respect of the amended plans. However, as I have found harm due to other factors, I have not undertaken this exercise as part of my consideration of this appeal.

15. I note the correspondence between parties in respect of pre-application advice and subsequent discussions and amendments which occurred during the Council's consideration of the proposals as well as the Council Officer's recommendation to approve. However, I have no reason to consider that the alleged advice was anything other than informal and Members do not have to accept the advice of their Officers. Moreover, under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, it now falls to me to determine the appeal, and in finding harm, I have done so based upon the submitted evidence and the planning merits of the case.
16. My attention has been drawn to perceived inconsistencies between the proceedings of the Committee and the Council's appeal statement. Having reviewed these documents, and the pertinent facts of the case, I am satisfied that the Council have been consistent in this regard and, rather than raising new points, they have simply elucidated upon specific details.

Planning Balance

17. The Council are currently unable to demonstrate a 5 year supply of deliverable housing. Paragraph 14 of the Framework therefore applies, which requires granting permission unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the Framework as a whole. In order to achieve sustainable development, the Framework identifies that economic, social and environmental gains must be sought jointly and simultaneously.
18. The erection of 4 dwellings would contribute to housing land supply, albeit to a very modest degree. The proposed development would be located in a highly accessible area on previously developed land. I attach moderate weight to these benefits.
19. However, in finding harm to the character and appearance of the area, I do not consider that the form and layout of the development makes an efficient and effective use of this land. I have also found conflict with the development plan in this regard. I consider that this attracts significant weight.
20. I therefore conclude that the adverse impacts of granting planning permission would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the suggested benefits. The proposals cannot, therefore, be considered to be the sustainable development for which the Framework presumes in favour.

Conclusion

21. For the reasons above, taking into account all other matters raised, I dismiss the appeal.

C Searson
INSPECTOR