
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 30 May 2017

by Chris Couper BA (Hons) DipTP MRTPI

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

Decision date: 12 June 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/D3640/D/17/3172104
33 Green Hill Close, Camberley GU15 1PG

- 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 Justin Rapley against the decision of Surrey Heath Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 16/1157, dated 4 August 2016, was refused by notice dated 3 March 2017.
 - The development proposed is described as a single storey rear and first floor extension.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matter

2. I have taken the description of the proposal from the planning application form, although I note that the scheme also involves single storey front extensions as set out on the appeal form.

Main Issues

3. The main issues are the effect of the proposed development on:
 - the character and appearance of the area; and
 - the living conditions at no. 35 Green Hill Close, with particular regard to the outlook from that property, and the availability of light to it.

Reasons

Character and appearance

4. The dwellings on this part of Green Hill Close are of a varied style, but are generally detached and set back from the highway, albeit at different distances from it. Trees close to the road, front gardens and views between and above the dwellings to woodland beyond, give the area a spacious and landscaped quality. The Council refers to this area as being part of the Hedged Estates as defined in its Western Urban Area Character Supplementary Planning Document 2012 ('SPD'). At page 47 the SPD states that one of the pressures on this area is the reduction in gaps due to extensions and infilling.
 5. No. 33 Green Hill Close has a flat-roofed single storey side projection which abuts the boundary with no. 35. The two storey gable of no. 35 is set in
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slightly from that boundary. Consequently, whilst there is only a limited gap between these two dwellings at ground floor level, there is a large first floor gap, which is visible in the streetscene, and provides views through to the trees and woodland beyond.

6. Although the first floor extension would be set in approximately 0.8m from the side boundary, and its ridge would be lower than that of the host, it would result in a significant reduction in the first floor level gap between nos. 33 and 35. As a result, in the streetscene, these two detached dwellings would often appear as a single mass of two storey development. In the context of the staggered siting and varied style of nearby dwellings, it is that impact, rather than the scheme's forward projection and its hipped roof, which would cause significant harm to the area's character and appearance.
7. Although no. 33 has a large front garden, and it may be the smallest two storey house on the street, those considerations do not address the harmful impacts that I have found. Whilst the appellant also states that the proposal is similar to an approved scheme on the site (Ref: 13/0551), I have no details before me to make a comparison with that development, and it is unclear whether it remains extant. That decision does not in any event change my conclusions regarding the harm that this proposal would cause.
8. A large extension has been approved and built at no. 27 Green Hill Close. However, as there is a significant step down in height to the adjacent bungalow, the context of that scheme is materially different to this one.
9. For the above reasons, the proposal would conflict with the design and character requirements of policy DM9 parts (i) and (ii) of the Surrey Heath Core Strategy and Development Management Policies 2011-2028 (2012) ('SHCS'), and with paragraphs 56 and 60 of the National Planning Policy Framework ('Framework') which attach great importance to good design and which seek to reinforce local distinctiveness. It would also be contrary to the SPD which states at HE2 that within the Hedged Estates closely set buildings with a cramped appearance will be opposed.

Living conditions

10. According to the Council's calculation, the proposed first floor side extension would project 4.8m beyond the rear elevation of no. 35. That part of no. 35 closest to the scheme contains large sliding doors which serve a lounge, and lead to a patio.
11. As those doors are set in from the boundary, and given that the first floor extension would have a limited ridge height and its roof would slope away from the boundary, the scheme would not have a significant overbearing impact on the rear outlook from no. 35's lounge. Although the scheme would be clearly seen from its patio, given the size of that area, and in the context of no. 35's large rear garden, it would not have a significant harmful impact on the outlook from that property's outdoor amenity areas.
12. As no. 33 lies roughly north of no. 35, the proposal would have very little, if any, overshadowing effect. Any loss of light to no. 35's lounge would be limited due to the first floor extension's roof form and ridge height, and its distance from the sliding doors. Additionally, the lounge receives light through its front-facing window.

13. Consequently the scheme would not affect living conditions to a harmful degree at no. 35, and would not conflict with that part of SHCS policy DM9 which requires development to respect the amenities of neighbouring occupiers, or with the broadly similar Framework objective.

Conclusions

14. Whilst the appellant refers to discussions that took place with the Council in order to address the reasons for refusal on a previous scheme, together with the alleged lack of an Officer site visit, I have dealt with the scheme before me on its merits.
15. Summing up, although the scheme would not affect living conditions to a harmful degree at no. 35, this is outweighed by the significant harm I have identified in relation to the character and appearance of the area. For that reason, and having regard to all other matters raised, the appeal is dismissed.

Chris Couper

INSPECTOR