



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 8 August 2017

by D R Cullingford BA MPhil MRTPI

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

Decision date: 1 September 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/P5870/W/17/3176319

105 Burdon Lane, Cheam, Sutton, SM2 7BZ

- This appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is by Overstone Properties Limited against the failure of the Sutton London Borough Council to determine an application for planning permission within the prescribed period.
 - The application (ref: A2017/76529/FUL) is dated 23 February 2017.
 - The development is described as the 'demolition of the existing dwelling and the erection of a 2-storey building, with accommodation in the roof space and associated parking, containing 9 flats.
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Decision

1. I dismiss this appeal.

Main issue

2. From what I have read and seen, I consider that this appeal turns on whether the proposal would be seen as an incongruous intrusion into this spacious suburban area contrary to policies PMP2 and BP12 of the Core Planning Strategy, to policies DM1 and DM3 of the Site Development Policies DPD and to policy 3.3 of The London Plan.

Reasons

3. The appeal property is a large, though somewhat dilapidated, detached Edwardian-like villa standing behind thick hedges and foliage within a spacious garden, littered with various cars and vehicles when I saw it. It is immersed amongst verdant avenues of similarly substantial dwellings and just outside the Burton Estate Area of Special Local Character. But, unlike most other dwellings here, the appeal property stands within the northern half of its large rectangular plot leaving the rest of the frontage (to the south) as garden land; the 'undeveloped' frontage is about 19m wide.
 4. The scheme entails the demolition of the existing dwelling and the erection of a 2-storey structure with dormer windows giving light to rooms in the roof space. It would contain 9 flats, most with 2 bedrooms but one with 3; 9 cycle spaces and 9 car parking spaces are shown within a basement with access from a driveway cut into, and descending below, the level of the front garden. The structure would be substantial. It would be 9.6m in height, over 29m in width and it would extend back into the plot by some 18m at ground floor level. The block has been designed to convey the semblance of 2 large dwellings in a suburban Surrey vernacular style (fairly steep hipped roofs adorned with a pseudo-Tudor front gable) with the glazed entrance to the
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connecting block set back (marginally on the ground floor but more evidently on the first floor) with the roof and eaves slightly below the height of the adjacent 'dwellings'. The 2 'dwelling elements' of the scheme would be practically identical in scale and position to the 2 detached houses permitted under a previous (and still extant) planning permission. The main difference between the permitted scheme and the current proposal involves the linking structure, the creation of flats rather than houses and the basement car parking.

5. This suburban area is characterised by large dwellings in spacious plots behind verdant foliage. Although there may be some semi-detached dwellings and several properties that have been enlarged to be quite close to side boundaries, I saw none that extended, in effect, across the width of 2 plots and none where a discernible space between adjacent detached, or pairs of semi-detached, dwellings was completely absent. The linking section here would obliterate the expected gap between the 2 dwelling-like structures and, being almost as high, would be noticeable in the street scene, in spite of the frontage foliage. The scale of the structure, extending across the width of, effectively, 2 average plots, would be quite unlike anything else nearby, even though large dwellings are common-place here. The need to dig out the front garden to create the driveway to the basement car park; the activity and traffic generated by 9 dwellings rather than 2; the substantial increase in density due to the scheme; and, the character imparted by flats rather than large 'family' houses; would all contribute to emphasising the incongruous presence of the scheme in addition to its discordant scale and appearance. Hence, I consider that this proposal would be seen as an incongruous intrusion into this spacious suburban area contravening the aims and requirements of the Development Plan as set out in policies PMP2, BP12 DM1 and DM3.
6. I have considered all the other matters raised. Of course it is important to make good use of land, particularly sites that have been previously developed. And, I accept that this scheme would contribute to meeting some of the housing needs in the wider London area by providing some variety in the dwellings available here. But the Framework (NPPF) advises that those aims are to be met by schemes of 'good design' that reflect the character, identity and appearance of their surroundings. For the reasons indicated, I am afraid that this proposal would fail to reflect that advice. Hence, I find neither those nor any other matter raised sufficiently compelling to alter my conclusion that this appeal should be dismissed.

David Cullingford
INSPECTOR