



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 19 July 2017

by Rory MacLeod BA MRTPI

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

Decision date: 5th September 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/Q3630/W/17/3173121

2A Simons Walk, Englefield, Egham TW20 9SQ

- 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 Mrs S Hamid against the decision of Runnymede Borough Council.
 - The application Ref RU.16/1845, dated 9 November 2016, was refused by notice dated 16 January 2017.
 - The development proposed is demolition of the existing house and construction of a new dwelling and garage.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the development on the character and appearance of the surrounding area.

Reasons

3. The appeal relates to the provision of a replacement dwelling on a large plot that has three road frontages. The present dwelling fronts on to Simons Walk, has a return frontage to Bakeham Lane, where there is a line of mature trees, and a rear garden backing on to London Road (A.30). Whilst the area is predominantly residential in character, there is variety in the size and form of dwellings. Simons Walk comprises a mixture of single storey bungalows, chalet bungalows and two storey houses, all detached but of differing designs and set within plots of differing widths. To the south of the junction with Simons Walk, Bakeham Lane is characterised by two storey detached houses generally on narrower plots. On the opposite side of London Road are substantial two storey Edwardian buildings some with rooms in the roof.
4. It is proposed to replace the present bungalow with a house similar in its siting and width; a garage would be provided in the same location as the existing garage but there would be open ground adjacent to 2 Simons Walk where there is presently a carport. The house would incorporate a basement but would be of two storey appearance. It would have a distinctive design with the vertical emphasis of long aligned windows to front and rear elevations contrasting with the horizontal emphasis of the width of the house, some 16m, and a very shallow pitched roof.

5. The roof in particular would represent a departure from a predominant characteristic of housing in the surrounding area in which the majority of buildings have shorter, steeper pitched roofs, often set in plain tiles. Its ridge would be comparable in height to that of the adjacent bungalow. There are higher buildings in the vicinity, but the mass of the house in relation to its width and depth, and its squat appearance would not sit comfortably in the context of the existing townscape on this prominent corner site.
6. In this respect the proposal would be contrary to saved policy H09 of the Runnymede Borough Local Plan Second Alteration 2001 (RBLP) which sets a requirement for new housing to be sensitively designed and not to damage the character and amenity of established residential areas. Similarly there would be conflict with policy BE2 in which proposals should respect townscape character by reference to issues including street scene and roof treatment.
7. The appellant has drawn my attention to other aspects of both these policies and I concur that the proposal would satisfy the majority of other requirements specified. Reference is also made to paragraphs within the National Planning Policy Framework (The Framework) in promoting sustainable development and requiring good design. Whilst paragraph 60 of The Framework does state that "decisions should not attempt to impose architectural styles or particular tastes", and I note that the proposal has been modified following pre-application advice, it concludes that "it is, however, proper to seek to promote or reinforce local distinctiveness". In my opinion the proposal has a cohesive design that would address the various road frontages, but it would not integrate well into the character of the present built environment, or reflect the identity of local surroundings and materials.
8. Reference has also been made to the recently approved and implemented enlargement of 29 Simons Walk. This is on a different part of the road on a narrower plot with closer relationships to neighbouring dwellings of varying heights, designs and materials. I do not regard this as a precedent for the proposal.
9. Finally, the appellant has opined that the proposal should be seen as a hinge element, exploiting the corner location and not constrained by the context of the present structure at 2 Simons Walk. I agree that the site has potential for an innovative development to exploit this setting, but this does not outweigh the harm arising to the character of the area that I have described.

Other matters

10. On the opposite side of Bakeham Lane is the Grade 1 listed Royal Holloway University of London, set back substantially from the road and screened by trees. I agree with the Council that its setting would not be harmed.

Conclusion

11. For the reasons set out above and having regard to all matters raised, I conclude that the development would adversely affect the character and appearance of the surrounding area and that the appeal should be dismissed.

Rory MacLeod

INSPECTOR