
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 18 October 2017

by Penelope Metcalfe BA(Hons) MSc DipUP DipDBE MRTPI IHBC

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

Decision date: 02 November 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/R3650/D/17/3179934

9 Cherry Tree Road, Rowledge, Farnham, GU10 4AB

- 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 Phoebe Browne against the decision of Waverley Borough Council.
 - The application Ref WA/2017/0929, dated 14 May 2017, was refused by notice dated 12 July 2017.
 - The development proposed is extension into re-entrant front and remodelling of roof and elevations.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main issues

2. The main issues are the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area and on the living conditions of neighbouring residents.

Reasons

3. 9 Cherry Tree Road is a substantial four-bedroom detached chalet bungalow, permitted in 1975, with an attached double garage, constructed of brick and tile hanging. It is in an established residential area, where the dwellings are typically set back from the road in good sized plots with mature hedges and landscaping and constructed of brick and tile hanging with tiled or slate roofs.
4. The other properties in the street are mixed in size and style. Along the same side of the street as No.9 most of the dwellings are detached bungalows and chalet bungalows, with a small number of larger two storey houses. Development on the other side of the road is spaced more widely, with a number of properties appearing as part two-storey and part single storey because of their asymmetric roof form and prominent dormers.
5. The relevant policies in this case include policies D1 and D4 of the Waverley Borough Local Plan 2002 (the local plan). Policy D1 seeks to encourage enhancement of the environment and states that development will not be permitted where, among other things, it would harm the visual character of a locality, particularly in respect of the design and scale of the development and its relationship to its surroundings, and it would result in a loss in general amenity enjoyed by neighbours. Policy D4 requires development to be of a high quality of design, in accordance with a number of criteria, including scale,

- height, form and appearance; respect for the local distinctiveness of the area, and regard for the amenities of neighbouring properties.
6. The Council is in the process of replacing the local plan. The draft Local Plan Part 1: Strategic Policies and Sites 2016 (the draft local plan) has been subject to Examination and some modifications are proposed. Substantial weight can now be given to policies where no modifications are proposed and significant weight can be given to those where modifications are proposed. Policy TD1 is relevant in this case. It seeks to protect the character and amenity of the Borough by, among other things, requiring new development to be of a high quality design which responds to the distinctive local character of the area, in accordance with the Council's design guidance.
 7. The Council has not specifically stated whether policy TD1 is subject to modification, but since it accords with the principles set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework), I give it substantial weight in determining this appeal. Local plan policies D1 and D4 also accord with the Framework and carry substantial weight.
 8. The Farnham Neighbourhood Plan 2013-2031 (the FNP) has recently been the subject of a referendum, but it is unclear to me whether it has been adopted. It includes policy FNP16 which requires building extensions to be of good quality design and to meet criteria similar to those in the local plan and draft local plan policies. It carries some weight as a material consideration in that it accords with the Framework.
 9. The Council's Supplementary Planning Document *Residential Extensions* 2010 offers advice regarding the size and scale of extensions and the spacing between houses in the street.

Character and appearance

10. The proposal is for a complete remodelling of the existing dwelling, including extending the existing footprint by filling in the corner between the front of the double garage and the north side elevation. The existing steeply sloping roof form with its ridge perpendicular to the street, together with the pitched roof and dormer windows over the garage would be altered to a double range pitched roof with central valley gutter, parallel with the road, over two full storeys of accommodation. The existing prominent chimney would be retained, the external walls would be clad with Western Red Cedar and new PPC aluminium windows would be installed in all elevations.
11. I consider that the design of the proposal would not be of a sufficiently high quality and that its overall form, height, scale, bulk, layout and materials would not be appropriate to the site or make a positive contribution to the appearance of the street scene.
12. The Framework encourages innovative design and, in my view, it is not always necessary to preserve a particular building form if there would be obvious benefits. However, it also stresses the importance of promoting or reinforcing local distinctiveness. The surroundings in this case are characterised by a variety of building forms, some of which are relatively large. However, I consider that, in general, they do not appear disproportionately large within their plots, and their form and the juxtaposition between them are such that there is an air of spaciousness and light between and above them. The

proposal would be out of keeping with this in scale and bulk and so would not protect or enhance the appearance of the street scene. The predominant building material is brick, and although the prevalence of flat roofed dormers is not particularly attractive, there are some architectural features of interest, for example, in gables facing the road.

13. The existing building is of a design which is very much of its time and I appreciate that the appellant wishes to make improvements to both its appearance and thermal efficiency. It is a substantial four-bedroom house, whose footprint fills the width of the plot to within approximately 1m and 1.2m of the north and south side boundaries respectively. However, it does not appear unduly large within the plot, partly because the main roof form with its gable elevation to the street and the set back of the garage element reduce its apparent height and maintain the general spacious character of the street and sky views though the gaps to either side.
14. Although the proposal would not be higher than the highest point of the existing roof, it would introduce a full height two storey building across almost the whole width of the site, including the infill which would form a continuous building line with the existing front elevation. The re-orientation of the main roof ridge would emphasise the increase in the overall size and bulk of the building which I consider would harm the visual character of the street scene.
15. In my view, the proposed fenestration, particularly along the front elevation facing the street, would give the building a somewhat institutional rather than domestic appearance. The uniform size of the windows, apart from the ground floor ones being taller, gives no indication of the function or status of the rooms they serve. Their uneven rhythm along the frontage, where they are neither clearly individually spaced nor clearly paired, would give a rather irregular appearance to the elevation, further disrupted by the prominent feature of the chimney.
16. I consider that the proposed use of red cedar cladding on all elevations, apart from the small rear extension, would be a further unacceptable feature of the design of the remodelled house. The use of red brick in the dwellings along the street is one strong element that unites those buildings and makes a major contribution to the distinctiveness of the local area.
17. The existing internal layout is awkward in terms of the location of the entrance in relation to the internal circulation area and stairs and I appreciate the appellant's wish to improve this situation. However, placing the main entrance at the side, rather than at the front facing the street, would add to the institutional appearance of the front elevation and result in a dead frontage and a lack of clarity as to how to access the house.
18. I note that the external layout of the site would be altered so that pedestrians can access the entrance door directly from the street via a paved path. However, for the occupiers of the house, the entrance would not be particularly conveniently sited in relation to the parking spaces, since those are proposed in the northeast corner of the front area, furthest from the door, in contrast with the existing arrangement where there is access either internally, directly from the garage to the house, or externally through the entrance at the front corner of the house.

19. I have taken account of neighbours' representations of support for the proposal which suggest that it would be an improvement on the existing 1970s building. I was unable to view No. 7 which lies behind No.9, but I understand that it is of a shape and style similar to the proposed house. However, it is set back behind No. 9 and not visible from the street and therefore has no impact on the character and appearance of the street scene compared with that made by the variety of bungalows along the street which forms the context for this development.
20. I conclude that the proposal would harm the character and appearance of the area because of its scale, height, form and appearance and because its design and materials would fail to respect the local distinctiveness of the area, contrary to local plan policies D1 and D4 and policy TD1 of the draft local plan and the guidance in the Framework.

Living conditions

21. The proposal would result in a large two storey wall with two gables facing the neighbouring property, No. 11, which would appear as a mainly blank wall above ground floor level, apart from a single window. Its height and width and proximity to the common boundary are such that it would have an overbearing impact on the outlook from the rear garden and the first floor side windows of No.11. Its impact would be mitigated by the separation provided by the intervening garage and shed to the side of No. 11 and because, as I understand it, one of the windows serves a bathroom and the other is a secondary window to a bedroom. Also, No. 11 lies to the south of No. 9 and any overshadowing would therefore be negligible.
22. I consider that there would be some visual impact on the outlook of the occupiers of No. 11, especially from the rear garden, but the latter is of a good size and overall, the impact on the occupiers would not be sufficient, on its own, to justify dismissing the appeal. It does, however, add weight to my finding on the other main issue of character and appearance.
23. I appreciate that the occupiers of No. 5 are overlooked by the existing dormer windows of No. 9 which face their property and that the proposal would improve that situation. While this would be a benefit of the proposal, I consider that it would not be sufficient reason to permit a development which I find to be otherwise unacceptable.
24. On balance, I find that although the proposal would not have an unacceptable impact on the living conditions of neighbouring residents, it would cause unacceptable harm to the character and appearance of the area by virtue of its size and design. In my view, the property could be successfully extended, but with a design more appropriate to the surroundings.
25. For the reasons given above, the appeal is dismissed.

PAG Metcalfe

INSPECTOR