The Planning Inspectorate

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 3 July 2018

by Siobhan Watson BA(Hons) MCD MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 11 July 2018

Appeal Ref: APP/D3640/W/17/3189681
Land at Pinelands, The Ridgeway, Lightwater, GU18 5XS

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant outline planning permission.
- The appeal is made by Mr Andrew Muckett against the decision of Surrey Heath Borough Council.
- The application Ref 17/0725, dated 2 August 2017, was refused by notice dated 26 October 2017.
- The development proposed is the erection of a detached two-storey four-bedroom dwelling.

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matter

2. The application was submitted in outline with access and scale sought for approval. Appearance, landscaping and layout were reserved for subsequent approval. A site layout plan, floorplans and elevations have been provided which I shall treat as illustrative apart from in respect of the proposed scale of the development.

3. Following the submission of a Reptile Report from the appellant, the Council has confirmed that the information appropriately addresses its second reason for refusal.

Main Issue

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

Reasons

5. The appeal site is the garden of a large detached property which stands within a substantial plot. The Ridgeway has a mixed character containing houses of different ages and styles. The appeal site is on the side of the road which contains a handful of houses with generous spacing between them. These plots contain mature landscaping and provide a spacious and sylvan character to the street-scene.

6. The proposed house would be of a fairly substantial size being of a two-storey, four-bedroom scale. Its close proximity to Heronswood would be out of character with the existing generous spacing between dwellings. This would be exacerbated by the proposed dwelling being sited on a higher land level than

Heronswood which would result in a dominant appearance against its neighbour. In addition, the house would be close to the road and have an unusually small amount of garden space directly in front of the building in comparison to its neighbours. This would further reduce the appearance of spaciousness. I appreciate that the proposed layout is only indicative but due to the surrounding trees and a potentially unacceptable relationship with the existing house at Pinelands, I am unconvinced that the house could be acceptably sited further back into the plot.

7. I note the appellant's comments that the house would be no closer to the road than the existing garage but the garage is a much smaller and more discrete building than the proposed dwelling. I appreciate that there are other triangular plots nearby and that the overall width of the site would be generous. However, it is the specific siting and orientation of the house in relation to the highway and Heronswood that would be uncharacteristic of its surroundings. I also accept that the houses on the opposite side of the road and on Ridgeway Close are fairly close together but this factor does not justify harm to the part of the road where the appeal site is, which is of a different character to other parts.

8. The submitted Tree Constraints Plan shows several trees that would require removal. However, these trees have already been felled and I have nothing to suggest that they have been felled unlawfully. Since the trees have already gone, no difference could be made by withholding planning permission.

9. For the above reasons, I conclude that the proposal would harm the character and appearance of the area. It would therefore conflict with Policies CP2 and DM9 of the Surrey Heath Core Strategy and Development Management Policies 2011-2028 (SHCS); Principles B1 and B8 of the Lightwater Village Design Statement; and Principle 7.1 of the Surrey Heath Residential Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). In combination, these policies seek to protect the character and appearance of the area, including respecting the spacious character of the residential areas and ensuring that setbacks in new developments complement the street-scene.

10. The Council has referred to Principle 8.4 of its SPD but this is concerned with amenity space and is not directly relevant to the main issue of character and appearance.

Other Matters

11. The dwelling would add another unit to the local housing supply but this benefit would not outweigh the harm I have identified. I have considered all other matters raised, including the representations from interested parties but none outweigh the conclusions I have reached.

Conclusion

12. I dismiss the appeal.

Siobhan Watson

INSPECTOR