



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 18 June 2019

by M Allen BSc (Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 17 July 2019

Appeal Ref: APP/L3625/W/19/3225205
Mole End, 1 Church Road, Horley RH6 7EY

- 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 Bob Simpson against the decision of Reigate & Banstead Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 18/02568/F, dated 7 December 2018, was refused by notice dated 7 March 2019.
 - The development proposed is described as "Proposal for 2 new semi detached 2 bedroom chalet style dwellings to rear plot on 1 Church Road. Alterations to existing host dwelling including demolition of existing garage and proposed two storey rear extension over existing ground floor projection."
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue raised in this case is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

3. The appeal site lies to the rear of 1 Church Road, which is a large, detached dwelling fronting the highway. The surrounding properties in the immediate vicinity are also generally large and detached, although I noted the presence of some semi-detached properties. Plot sizes in the area are commonly generous which provides a sense of spaciousness within the vicinity, which positively contributes to the character and appearance of the area.
4. The plot sizes of the proposed properties would be substantially smaller than those that surround them. Despite the location of the proposal to the rear of an existing property, the dwellings would still be visible from the public realm. They would appear as a harmful departure from the more generously proportioned plot sizes that are otherwise present. As such, whilst I appreciate some other garden sizes have been reduced to accommodate other development, the subdivision of the existing garden area as is proposed within the appeal scheme would not be reflective of the pattern and grain of the surrounding built form. As a consequence, it would erode the spaciousness of the locality and appear as an incongruous addition to the area. Whilst I have had regard to the examples of other developments that have been drawn to my attention, in my view, these are not directly comparable to the scheme before

me, in that the submitted details refer to sites which encompass larger areas, allowing for more spacious developments than that proposed within the appeal scheme. Moreover, I appreciate that it is desirable to deliver development at an appropriate density, however this does not mean that harmful development should be delivered on this basis.

5. The dwellings are designed as a pair of semi-detached units, with a gable to the front which stretches the width of the two properties and a ridge line running from front to back. To the roof planes on either side would be hipped-roof dormer windows, serving first-floor bathrooms internally. Whilst I note the appellants contention that the scale, size and shape of buildings in the local area is varied, along the street on which the appeal site is located I observed a regularity in the scale and form of properties. Generally, the nearby properties are Victorian or Edwardian and include traditional detailing and features.
6. This would not be replicated by the appeal scheme, which would have a significantly atypical appearance. As a consequence, the proposed building would jar with the attractive townscape features in the area, notwithstanding its location to the rear of existing properties. Whilst there are forward projecting gables present on other properties in the area, these do not stretch the entire front elevation, are generally narrower elements of the elevations and lack the overdominance of that proposed. In respect of the proposed dormer windows, I observed that these were not uncommon elements in the surrounding area, however those proposed lack the proportions and subtlety of those that are currently visible. Thus, the scheme would appear as an inharmonious addition to the currently attractive streetscape.
7. Furthermore, I noted that there were views of the appeal site from the nearby Ringley Avenue, across existing rear gardens. In these views the proposal would be obvious as a building that pays little regard to the style of adjacent housing. This would have the effect of further emphasising the proposal as a discordant addition.
8. I note the concerns of the Council in respect of the access being cramped and the dominance of hard landscaping. However, I observed that there is variety in the positioning of vehicular accesses as well as in the treatment of site frontages and front gardens. As such, I consider that in these respects the scheme would not be significantly dissimilar from other locations in the area and consequently, would not be materially harmful. There is also reference to the spacing between buildings. In this respect, I noted that there is also variety in the spacing and separation of buildings in the area. As such, the proximity of the proposed buildings to the site boundaries would not result in an overly cramped development. Nonetheless, the lack of harm in respect of these matters does not overcome the concerns I have outlined above.
9. Thus, the scheme would have an adverse effect on the character and appearance of the area and would conflict with Policies Ho9, Ho13 and Ho14 of the Reigate and Banstead Local Plan (2005). Together, and amongst other things, these policies seek to ensure development maintains and enhances the built environment, as well as that development conforms to and maintains the pattern of development in the area.
10. The Council's reasons for refusal also refers to Policy Ho16 and the Supplementary Planning Guidance in the Local Distinctiveness Design Guide. However, Policy Ho16 refers to frontage plots, which given the location of the

site behind existing dwellings, does not appear relevant in this instance. Additionally, I have not been provided with a copy of the cited Supplementary Planning Guidance. Nevertheless, I have found harm above sufficient to dismiss the appeal.

Other Matters

11. The appeal scheme also includes an extension to the existing property. I agree with the Council that this element of the scheme would be acceptable. This does not however outweigh the harm that I have identified.

Conclusion

12. Whilst I have found that the scheme would not have a harmful effect in terms of its access arrangements and hard landscaping, it would have an unacceptable effect on the character and appearance of the area having regard to its plot size and design.
13. Therefore, for the reasons given and having regard to all matters raised, the appeal is dismissed.

Martin Allen

INSPECTOR