



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 12 February 2020

by Rachael Pipkin, BA (Hons), MPhil, MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 26th February 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/M3645/W/19/3242002

Corner of Rushfords & Station Road, Lingfield, RH7 6DZ

- 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 & Mrs Gee against the decision of Tandridge District Council.
 - The application Ref: TA/2019/1621 dated 6 September 2019, was refused by notice dated 8 November 2019.
 - The development proposed is erection of chalet dwelling with access, parking and landscaping.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matters

2. The application form referred to the address of the appeal site as 'Electricity Sub Station, Station Road, Lingfield, RH7 6DZ'. Both the Council's decision notice and the appeal form describe the site as 'Corner of Rushfords & Station Road, Lingfield, RH7 6DZ'. This more accurately describes the site as the electricity sub-station is not within the site boundary and I have adopted it throughout my decision.
3. As part of the appeal, the appellants submitted a revised plan which alters the internal layout of the proposed dwelling by reducing the scheme to a one bedroom unit. As this is a minor amendment, I do not consider the interests of those who would normally have been consulted would be prejudiced if I take this amended plan into account and I have determined the appeal accordingly.

Main Issues

4. The main issues are:
 - the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the surrounding area;
 - whether the proposed development would provide satisfactory living conditions for future occupants, with particular regard to internal space; and
 - whether the proposed development would contribute to the reduction of carbon dioxide emissions.

Reasons

Character and appearance

5. The appeal site is within the settlement of Lingfield. It occupies a prominent position at the junction of Rushfords, a cul-de-sac, and Station Road which forms part of a staggered crossroads with Saxbys Lane and Crowhurst Road. The site is a small, largely triangular plot of land enclosed by a low hedge and is used as a residential garden. The Council's delegated report indicates that this garden is associated with Rushford Cottage on the opposite side of Rushfords. An electricity sub-station enclosed by high fencing is positioned on the Station Road frontage. This occupies a rectangular area and extends into the plot.
6. The surrounding area is residential in character with mainly two-storey properties of varying ages and styles including terraced, semi-detached and detached properties set back behind front gardens of varying depths. Directly adjacent to the site, there are two-storey semi-detached traditional properties whilst on the opposite side of Rushfords, there is a chalet bungalow, Hawthorn Cross. The road junctions of both Rushfords and Saxbys Lane are wide, with an area of open space and a grass verge adjacent to Saxbys Lane opposite the appeal site. This gives the area an open and spacious character. The appeal site, due to its undeveloped and open character, contributes in a similar way to the spaciousness and openness of the area.
7. The proposed chalet bungalow would be positioned centrally within the plot with its main elevation fronting Station Road. It would be set in from the site boundaries, however, due to the shape and size of the site, the north-east corner of the building would be close to the boundary hedge along Rushfords. A section of the front of the building would be positioned behind the enclosed sub-station and separated from this by a pathway. It would be possible for people to move around the outdoor space; however, the retained garden space would be irregular in shape and unlike the more spacious plots characteristic of surrounding development. As such, the proposed building would appear awkwardly sited, cramped within the plot and out of keeping with neighbouring development.
8. Rushfords curves around the appeal site towards its junction with Station Road. This makes the appeal site particularly prominent when approaching from Rushfords. Whilst the proposed building would not be overly tall, it would be clearly visible above the boundary hedge. The height and width of the building would reduce the open character of the site, enclosing the junction of Rushfords with Station Road. This would be out of character with the open and spacious layout characteristic of this part of Station Road.
9. The proposed dwelling would be similar in design to Hawthorn Cross and would feature front and rear facing dormers incorporating three windows. However, it would have smaller proportions, with a lower ridge height. The eaves and the top of its front facing dormers would align with those of Hawthorn Cross and the building would have the same horizontal emphasis. However, the lower overall height of the proposed building would make it appear squat when viewed in this context. Furthermore, the proposed house would also be lower in height than both the main roof and the lower two-storey extension to the side of No. 7. It would therefore not relate to this property. As such it would appear

incongruous within the street scene. The use of brickwork and detailing would not overcome the harm arising from this.

10. My attention has been drawn to two other recent housing developments, Plot 1, St Annes, Newchapel Road and Birch Lodge, Vicarage Road, both within Lingfield. Both these developments occupy modestly sized plots and, in the case of Birch Lodge, are adjacent to an electricity sub-station. However, they are not comparable to the appeal scheme as they do not occupy such a visually prominent position within the street scene. I have also been referred to a development at Knights Mead near to the appeal site where the corner properties are close to the junction with Crowhurst Road. However, the pattern of development along this road is significantly less open than that around the appeal site. It is also not therefore comparable. In any event, I must determine the appeal scheme on its own individual merits.
11. I conclude that the proposed development would significantly harm the character and appearance of the surrounding area. It would therefore conflict with Policy CSP18 of the Tandridge District Core Strategy 2008 (Core Strategy) and Policies DP7 and DP11 of the Tandridge Local Plan: Part 2 – Detailed Policies 2014 (Local Plan). These policies together and amongst other things require new development to be of a high standard of design that reflects local character and is in keeping with the streetscape and does not result in overdevelopment.

Living conditions

12. The proposed development is indicated to provide 77 sq.m of floorspace with two bedrooms within the roof space, served by front and rear facing dormer windows. These bedrooms would be less than 9 sq.m. The amended plan reduces the number of bedrooms to one with a bathroom and storage on the first floor. There is no change in the size of the bedroom.
13. The Council raised concerns about the size of the proposed bedrooms which it considers would fall significantly below the size standards as set out in the Government's *Technical housing standards – nationally described space standard 2015* (NDSS). The Council has no policy or guidance on space standards and cannot rely on non-compliance with the technical standards as a reason for refusal, nevertheless the standards provide a useful benchmark. Notwithstanding that this cannot be rigorously applied, the extent to which the unit provides acceptable living conditions is nevertheless a valid material consideration.
14. The NDSS recommends that a dwelling that provides 2 or more bed spaces should have at least one double bedroom. The proposed bedroom would be small and would fall below the recommended minimum bedroom size for a double bedroom. The amended proposal would overcome this concern insofar as it would provide a 1 bed space unit. However, the submitted drawings do not indicate that there would be adequate headroom within the entire space identified as the bedrooms which would reduce the useable floorspace available to future occupants. The appellants have indicated that the recommended 2.3m ceiling height could be provided. However, I have no firm evidence that this could be achieved. Given this, I am not persuaded that the accommodation would provide adequate living conditions as either a 1 or 2 bedroom unit.

15. The appellants have suggested that the house would be ideal for occupation by two individuals who could commute from Lingfield to work and that this would meet a need. However, I have been provided with no evidence that there is a need for this type of accommodation within this area. In any event, even if this type of accommodation was in demand, it does not overcome my concerns with the proposed living space.
16. I conclude that the proposed development would not provide satisfactory living conditions for future occupants, with particular regard to internal space. It would therefore conflict with Policy DP7 of the Local Plan which requires the proposal to provide a satisfactory environment for occupiers.

Energy

17. Policy CSP14 of the Core Strategy requires a development of a single new dwelling to provide a saving of 10 per cent in carbon dioxide emissions through the provision of on-site renewable energy. The appellants have indicated that this would be met through the provision of photovoltaic panels or an air source heat pump. They have submitted a renewable energy statement in support of this which indicates that a 10 per cent reduction will be met. However, I have not been provided with any substantive evidence to demonstrate any detail of a proposed scheme including predicted carbon dioxide levels or the location and specification of any relevant equipment. In the absence of this detail, I am not persuaded that the required carbon emissions reductions can be achieved.
18. I have considered whether these details could be provided through the imposition of a planning condition. However, due to the limited size of the site and the scale of the proposed development, it has not been demonstrated that alternative methods could be used without the potential to impact on the appearance of the scheme.
19. I conclude that the proposed development would not contribute to the reduction of carbon dioxide emissions. It would therefore conflict with Policy CSP14 of the Core Strategy which seeks to reduce carbon dioxide emissions as referred to above.

Planning Balance

20. The Government is seeking to significantly boost the supply of housing and the Council accepts that it is not able to demonstrate a 5-year supply of deliverable housing sites.
21. The site is within the existing urban area and in an accessible location for facilities and services, including Lingfield railway station. There would be small social and economic benefits associated with the construction and occupation of the proposed development. A single, detached dwelling would make a minimal contribution to the supply of housing. However, I have found that the proposal would be harmful to the character and appearance of the area, would not provide satisfactory living conditions for future occupiers and would not contribute to a reduction in carbon dioxide emissions. These environmental harms are matters which carry significant weight in the balance.
22. This leads me to conclude that the adverse impacts of the proposal would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits. The presumption in favour of sustainable development therefore does not apply in this case.

Conclusion

23. I have found the proposal would be contrary to the development plan. There are no other considerations that outweigh that conflict and for this reason, I conclude the appeal should be dismissed.

Rachael Pipkin

INSPECTOR