
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 22 January 2020

by Neil Smith BA Hons BTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 26 February 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/L3625/W/19/3241150

6 Seale Hill, Reigate RH2 8HZ

- 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 Mrs Lydia Reed against the decision of Reigate & Banstead Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 18/02557/OUT, dated 6 December 2018, was refused by notice dated 23 May 2019.
 - The development proposed is an outline application for erection of new dwelling with associated parking and access.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matters

2. The application is submitted in outline with all matters reserved for subsequent approval apart from access, layout and scale. The application was accompanied by several plans, which show an illustrative scheme comprising a two-storey detached dwelling. I have considered these plans solely on the basis that they have been submitted for illustrative purposes.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the appeal proposal on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

4. The appeal site accommodates a large two storey detached dwelling. The dwelling is located to the rear of a large rectangular shaped plot and there are extensive garden areas to the front and sides with a smaller area to the rear. The land slopes steeply upwards from the road, with the dwelling occupying an elevated position above that of the neighbouring dwelling, No 4. It shares a driveway with the neighbouring property, No 8, which is also located to the rear of its large rectangular shaped plot.
5. Seale Hill is a short cul-de-sac with the dwellings displaying a range of designs. The houses occupy large rectangular plots, with the widths of the plots being wider than the houses and the front elevations having some prominence within the street scene. There is an abundance of mature green vegetation and trees and there are distinctive boundaries to the properties.

6. The appeal proposal is for the construction of a two-storey detached dwelling, which would be positioned towards the rear of a long narrow plot. It would sit at the bottom of a steep embankment, which wraps around the rear garden area of No 40 The Bield; be at a lower level than the host dwelling; and be approximately one storey above the other neighbouring dwelling, No 4. It would share the access road with No's 6 and 8 and the indicative plans show two off-street car parking spaces and associated turning head to the front of the plot.
7. Whilst the appearance of the dwelling has been reserved for future approval the plans indicate a contemporary flat roof design. I am mindful that the Council did not raise an objection in this regard, and I have no reason to reach a different conclusion. However, whilst the dwelling would not be of a size that is uncharacteristic of the dwellings in the area, it is set on a plot which would have narrower road frontage than the house itself, which would be at odds with the prevailing pattern of development in the area.
8. I am mindful that the dwelling has been designed to be single aspect and orientated to avoid any direct overlooking to the neighbouring dwelling, No 4. However, its elevated position at the rearmost part of the plot would appear as a dwelling partially to the rear of No 4 when viewed from the street. Coupled with its close proximity to the side and rear boundaries, the dwelling would sit uncomfortably within the street scene and appear as a cramped form of development.
9. The appellant argues that the development incorporates a similar plot frontage with boundary treatments that reflect the existing street context. The appellant also states that the scale and massing of the proposed dwelling has been carefully considered to ensure that the development does not lead to an over-dominance of the built form within the plot and that the landscaped boundaries would screen the dwelling. However, this does not overcome the unacceptable position of the dwelling within the appeal site and it would still be visible from public vantage points as well as from the neighbouring dwellings.
10. The appellant has provided details of numerous other planning permissions that have been granted for small scale residential developments for one and two dwellings. Whilst I do not have the full planning histories of each of the schemes, and I note that several of the sites are also within Residential Areas of Special Character (RASC), the individual effects on the character and appearance are likely to have been different in each case. Therefore, I do not consider that they are directly comparable to the appeal proposal and in any event, I have determined this appeal with particular regard to its own planning merits.
11. I have had regard that part of the appeal site is within a RASC and that the proposed dwelling would be positioned in the urban area outside the RASC boundary. I am also mindful that the site is in an accessible location and that an additional dwelling would make a positive contribute to the housing stock. Nevertheless, this does not outweigh the conclusion that the appeal proposal, by virtue of its excessive size and positioning to the rear of a narrow plot in close proximity to its boundaries, would appear as a cramped form of development which would be inharmonious with the character and appearance of the area.

12. Consequently, the proposal conflicts with Policies Ho9, Ho13, Ho14 and Ho15 of the Reigate and Banstead Borough Local Plan (2005), Policies DES1 and DES3 of the emerging Development Management Plan (2019) and the Reigate and Banstead Local Distinctiveness Design Guide (2004) which require, amongst other things, development to conform to the pattern of development in the surrounding area.

Conclusions

13. For the reasons given above the appeal is dismissed.

Neil Smith

INSPECTOR