



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 5 February 2020

by David Wyborn BSc(Hons) MPhil MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 4 March 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/Y3615/W/19/3240532

124 Longacre, Ash GU12 6RR

- 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 M Newton against the decision of Guildford Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 19/P/01393, dated 7 August 2019, was refused by notice dated 7 October 2019.
 - The development proposed is a two bedroom dwelling with associated access.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matter

2. The plans and information that the Council had before it when the decision was made show a 2 bedroom dwelling. The above description reflects the 2 bedroom nature of the proposal which is also the description of the development used on the appeal form. I am satisfied that no one would be prejudiced by this wording of the description and I will determine the appeal accordingly.

Main Issues

3. The main issues are the effect of the development on:
 - the character and appearance of the area, and
 - the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area.

Reasons

Character and appearance

4. Longacre, in the general vicinity of the site, is characterised by semi-detached and terrace residential properties. There are reasonably generous spaces between these building groups at first floor level and a broad consistency with the design and external materials of the buildings, with most front gables flush with the front face of the properties. The spacing between buildings and the generally consistent pattern of development, together with front hedges and the occasional tree, provides a pleasant and reasonably verdant appearance to the area.
5. The site forms a corner plot within Longacre where the spacing between buildings is fairly typical of the surroundings and the gap makes a positive contribution to the character of this part of the road. The erection of a two

storey dwelling would erode some of the boundary spacing and the front gable set forward of the building line would be at variance with the general form of the properties in this section of Longacre. The addition of a dwelling would unbalance this pair of semi-detached dwellings, especially because of the prominence of the projecting gable element of the design. The reduction in the gap between properties and the form and appearance of this additional dwelling would detract from the fairly consistent and spacious appearance of the immediate area. Consequently, in the context of this site and the surroundings, the proposal would appear cramped and would harmfully erode part of the distinctive character of the area.

6. While the proposal would make efficient use of the land with the provision of an additional dwelling, this would be at the expense of the desirability of maintaining an area's prevailing character and setting, and therefore contrary to the policy approach set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework).
7. For the above reasons, I conclude that the proposal would harm the character and appearance of the area and therefore conflict with saved Policies G5 and H4 of the Guildford Borough Local Plan 2003 (the Local Plan 2003) and Policy D1 of the Guildford Borough Local Plan: Strategy and Sites 2015-2034 (the Local Plan 2019) and the Framework which seek development, amongst other things, to be in scale and character with the area.

Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area

8. The site lies within the zone of recreational influence of the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (TBHSPA). The TBHSPA Avoidance Strategy Supplementary Planning Document July 2017 sets out a costed scheme for the provision of Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) and Strategic Access Management and Monitoring (SAMM) to mitigate the recreational impacts from the occupants of additional dwellings on the TBHSPA. The appellant has indicated a willingness to pay the costed sum for the additional dwelling, however, I do not have before me a signed and dated planning agreement or other mechanism to be assured that the mitigation would be secured.
9. In these circumstances, I am unable to conclude that the proposal, either alone or in combination with other schemes, would not have an adverse effect on the integrity of the TBHSPA. I am not aware of any overriding public interest which would justify permitting the proposal or that there are any alternative solutions which would have no or a lesser effect on the integrity of the protected site. Consequently, in accordance with The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017, I conclude that planning permission cannot be granted.
10. Furthermore, in the light of the above analysis, the proposal would also conflict with saved Policy NE4 of the Local Plan 2003, Policy P5 of the Local Plan 2019 and saved Policy NRM6 of The South East Plan 2009 which require, amongst other things, that new residential development which is likely to have a significant effect on the ecological integrity of TBHSPA will be required to demonstrate that adequate measures are put in place to avoid or mitigate any potential adverse effects.

Other Matters

11. The scheme would not materially impact on the living conditions of neighbouring residents, satisfactory off-road car parking would be provided, the external and internal living spaces would be acceptable and the dwelling could be constructed to high environmental standards. Furthermore, a dwelling would be delivered within a built-up area, on a windfall site, in a general location with good access to services and facilities. There would be social and economic benefits to the area during construction and in subsequent occupation. The development would provide an additional unit to the housing supply but as only a single dwelling would be delivered I afford cumulatively all these benefits of the proposal limited weight.
12. The harm I have identified above are matters that I attribute substantial weight and it is such that the harm that would result from the proposal would not be outweighed by the benefits.

Conclusion

13. Having regard to the above, and taking all other matters into account, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

David Wyborn

INSPECTOR