



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 10 March 2020

by Robin Buchanan, BA (Hons), MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 17th April 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/Q3630/D/20/3245662

1A Alderside Walk, Englefield Green, TW20 0LX

- 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 Tom O’Gorman against the decision of Runnymede Borough Council.
 - The application Ref: RU.19/0319 dated 19 February 2019, was refused by notice dated 13 November 2019.
 - The development proposed is creation of a first floor to provide 2 x en-suite bedrooms by raising the height of the existing dwelling/house by 1.2m.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matter

2. The appellant submitted revised plans to the Council that were subject to public consultation and were the basis on which the Council determined the appeal application. Notwithstanding the description of development in the banner above, which comes from the application form, I have determined the appeal on the basis of the revised plans.

Main Issues

3. The main issues are the effect of the proposed development on:
 - (i) The character and appearance of the area; and
 - (ii) The living conditions of the occupiers of the neighbouring residential properties at Kinburn House, having particular regard to outlook from windows; and at 1 Alderside Walk, having particular regard to outlook from outdoor living space.

Reasons

Character and Appearance

4. The appeal property is a detached bungalow located within a residential area of mostly detached two storey houses of varied design and appearance. Alderside Walk is on a slope as it passes the appeal site – on the uphill side is Kinburn House while on the downhill side, away from the road, there is an abrupt and pronounced fall in land level down to 1 Alderside Walk.

5. The bungalow has a large, broadly rectangular footprint and is sited near the edge of this steep bank with a long side elevation facing the downhill side. However, its single storey form and low-pitched roof means that it recedes into its own landscaped garden, the wider landscape setting and is innocuous in the context of surrounding two storey houses. The bungalow is nonetheless noticeable in public views from Alderside Walk and Alder Close and despite its location amongst two storey houses is part of the established character of the area.
6. The proposed roof would have a similar overall form and appearance to the existing roof and the development would increase vertical height in all four elevations of the bungalow. In itself this would be a relatively modest increase in height and the resultant dwelling would be more in keeping with the general height of other nearby two-storey houses, including Kinburn House and 1 Alderside Walk.
7. However, the new dwelling would have significantly greater scale and massing than the bungalow and so greater overall visual presence. It would therefore dominate the taller (but much lower sited) house at 1 Alderside Walk at this point of most apparent gradient change and disrupt the existing, balanced transition and step up/step down in sequence of building heights along this part of Alderside Walk relative to topography.
8. The development would also result in a large area or 'band' of blank new elevation higher up in the building, between the top of ground floor windows and eaves level. As a consequence, this would create awkward and unusually proportioned elevations relative to eave and roof heights; but, also in relation to the horizontal arrangement of existing ground floor windows and doors and the size and placement of new upper floor windows, many of which are in the roof. Vertical blank wall, rather than low eaves and low-pitched main roof, would prevail.
9. Notwithstanding the narrow, landscaped appeal site frontage with Alderside Walk and that the bungalow is set back further from this road than other nearby houses, the development would be conspicuous in public views from Alderside Walk. In particular, from lower ground across and upwards over the front garden of 1 Alderside Walk and from lower ground within Alder Close, through gaps between existing houses. The proposed increase in height, scale and massing of the new dwelling, as well as change to its overall design and appearance, would as a result be unduly prominent and visually intrusive and cause material harm to the character and appearance of the area.
10. Accordingly, the proposed development is in conflict with saved Policy HO9(1)(a) and saved Policy BE2(1)(4)(5) and (6) of the Runnymede Borough Local Plan Second Alteration, April 2001 (LP). These policies seek to ensure that development is sensitively designed, does not damage the character of established residential areas and respects townscape features including existing buildings, topography, street scene and building height. These are also objectives of the Council's Householder Guide Supplementary Planning Guidance, July 2003 (SPG). The development would also conflict with the 'design' paragraphs 124, 127(a)(b)(c) and 130 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework).

Living Conditions

11. There are a number of windows in the facing elevation of Kinburn House, orientated towards the bungalow across a narrow gap. Outlook from the ground floor windows is already partly restricted by an existing boundary fence and some shrub planting and is mainly up towards the sky. Outlook from first floor windows is more open and extensive, including over and across the existing roof of the bungalow. The increased bulk and height of the part of the proposed development opposite these windows, which includes a new vertical elevation below a flat roof, would be in close proximity to Kinburn House. It would as a result introduce a greater degree of visual and physical containment at this point and be an overbearing presence, with a significant reduction in outlook from ground and, in particular, first floor windows. This would cause material harm to the living conditions of the occupiers of Kinburn House.
12. Part of the rear garden of 1 Alderside Walk is adjacent to the base of the bank, on the downhill side, and so is already enclosed to that extent by this feature. The proposed development would be close to the top edge of the bank. The increased height, scale and massing of the new house would be noticeable in outlook from this garden space. It would therefore increase enclosure and have an overbearing presence. Consequently, this would cause material harm to the living conditions of the occupiers of 1 Alderside Walk.
13. Accordingly, the proposed development is in conflict with LP Policy HO9(1)(a) and (d). This policy seeks to ensure that development is sensitively designed, does not damage the character of established residential areas and provides appropriate space between existing and proposed residential units – also objectives of the SPG. The development would also conflict with paragraphs 124, 127(a) and 130 of the Framework.

Other Matters

14. I appreciate that the appellant wishes to improve living arrangements and enjoyment of their property, but these matters do not lessen or outweigh the harm I have identified above in the main issues. I also realise the appellant has tried to work with the Council to overcome its concerns, including with amended proposals, but I have determined this appeal on its merits. I saw the property at Rudgwick (2B Alderside Walk) but I do not have full details; nonetheless that site and development is not the same as in the current appeal and I therefore give little weight to this matter.
15. I accept that the possibility of the proposed development setting a realistic precedent for similar development elsewhere in the locality may be limited but this is a neutral factor in my consideration of this appeal. I also note there would be no change to the footprint of the bungalow or its garden area, proposed materials would match existing, there would be adequate natural daylight/sunlight to new rooms and no harm to trees. There would also be no material overlooking or loss of privacy caused to occupiers of any neighbouring properties. Nonetheless, the absence of such harm is a neutral factor in my decision and does not lead me to conclude differently in terms of the harm that I have identified in the main issues.
16. I have considered that public views are likely to be more restricted during summer months when planting is in leaf, as well as the appellant's suggestion for a planning condition to provide new landscaping. However, this would not

mitigate adverse effects of the development and harm that would be caused; for example, it would not prevent the harm to outlook, nor would it render the design and appearance of the new dwelling more coherent.

Conclusion

17. For the reasons given, the appeal is dismissed.

Robin Buchanan

INSPECTOR