The Planning Inspectorate

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 7 July 2020

by D.R McCreery MA BA (Hons) MRTPI

An Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government

Decision date: 26 August 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/L3625/W/20/3244776
1 North Road, Reigate RH2 8LY

- 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 and Mrs Carvall against the decision of Reigate and Banstead Borough Council.
- The application Ref 19/01938/F, dated 27 September 2019, was refused by notice dated 2 December 2019.
- The development proposed is demolition of the existing dwelling and outbuildings and the erection of a development of six flats in a two storey building with roof accommodation together with the provision of refuse and recycling stores and four car parking spaces.

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are the effect of the proposed development on:

   - The character and appearance of the surrounding area.
   - The living conditions of occupiers of neighbouring properties, particularly in terms of sense of enclosure and loss of privacy.
   - Local highway conditions.

Reasons

Character and appearance

3. The appeal site is located on a corner plot at the junction of North Road and Eastnor Road. The area is residential in character and mostly comprises modest 2 storey dwellings with a mix of Victorian houses, such as the appeal property, sitting alongside modern properties. Whilst more varied in appearance, newer dwellings generally maintain the scale and some traditional features evident on the older properties. Notable exceptions to this prevailing character are the more imposing flat blocks of Saxon House, Norman House, and Roman House that sit on the opposite corner to the appeal site. Due to the prominent corner plot location the site is open to extensive public views, including longer views when travelling towards it from the Park Lane junction of Eastnor Road.

4. The proposed building that would replace the existing dwelling would adopt some of the elements of detailed design visible on traditional properties in the immediate area, such as window details and materials. Notwithstanding the general consistency that the new building would have with the front building lines of neighbouring properties, the new building would take up a substantial part of the site area, with only limited variation in height or break in mass. As such, the form and scale of the proposed development would be inconsistent with the more modest 2 storey dwellings that make up the prevailing character of the area.

5. In particular, both the eves and ridge would rise significantly above the immediate neighbours. Whilst described as a two storey building, the proposed development would include a significant roof form that would contribute further to the overall height and add unwelcome bulk to a building that would already be higher than the immediate neighbours.

6. In the context of the overall development, the step down of the outrigger type extension on the North Road side from the principal element on the Eastnor Road frontage would not be readily perceived in nearby views. This step down, and other aspects of the proposal designed to reduce the perceived scale of the building would be insufficient. The outcome would be a building that would be very prominent in the local street scene and of a scale that would be at odds with the prevailing character of the area and the scale of neighbouring properties. These impacts could not be overcome through use of conditions, for example governing landscaping or materials. Whilst the proposed development would represent a more intensive use of the site, this would come at the expense of a negative impact on the character and appearance of the area.

7. The more imposing flat blocks of Saxon House, Norman House, and Roman House sit on the opposite corner to the appeal site and are acknowledged as informing the general character of the area and the context of the site. Notwithstanding their presence in the street scene, the scale of these buildings are not consistent with the prevailing pattern of development in the area and they are separated from the appeal site by the road. The appeal site has a closer visual relationship with the more modest adjacent properties on North Road and Eastnor Road and their neighbours, and is an integral part of this context due to its prominent corner position. As such, introducing a building to the appeal site that attempts to transition between the 2 storey properties and the flat blocks is not a beneficial feature of the proposed development.

8. Whilst the proposed development would make a modest contribution to housing delivery and provide some additional natural surveillance, these factors do not outweigh the harm to the character and appearance of the area described above.

9. For the reasons set out above, I conclude that the proposed development would have a harmful effect on the character and appearance of the surrounding area. Consequently, I find conflict with Policy DES1 of the Reigate and Banstead Development Management Plan 2019 and Policy CS10 of the Core Strategy which collectively seeks to ensure that new development is of a high standard of design, including having a positive relationship with the surroundings.

Living conditions

10. In relation to a potential sense of enclosure to neighbouring properties on Eastnor Road and North Road, it is noted that these properties already experience a degree of enclosure to the rear due to the outbuildings and other structures that are close to the boundaries. As such, the existing outlook cannot be regarded as open in the way described by the Council. As experienced from the rear garden of the most affected property at No 2 Eastnor Road, the proposed development would result in the removal of the existing structures from close to the boundary and the outrigger type extension of a greater scale being built further away from the boundary. Whilst this would change the general outlook from the rear of No 2 and other neighbours, any sense of enclosure resulting would not be materially worse than existing. The effect on No 3 North Road would be similar, due to the position of the outrigger extension in relation to it.

11. Turing to loss of privacy, the proposed development would create some new views into neighbouring gardens. This would be mostly from the first floor windows of the outrigger type extension. Due to the existing levels of mutual overlooking that exists between properties and the distance of the windows from the boundary, the proposed development would have an acceptable impact on the privacy conditions of occupiers of neighbouring properties.

12. In light of the above, the proposed development would not have a harmful effect on the living conditions of occupiers of neighbouring properties. Consequently, I find no conflict with Policy DES1 of the Reigate and Banstead Development Management Plan 2019 which requires that new development should not adversely impacting upon the amenity of occupants of existing nearby buildings

Local highway conditions.

13. The Officer's Report identified a shortfall of 2 on street car parking spaces in order to meet the County Council's parking standards. During the appeal the Appellant submitted an amended plan showing 6 car parking spaces to meet the shortfall identified by the Council and also demonstrate the visibility splays requested by the Council. Commenting on this amended plan the Council refer to alternative standards in Annex 4 of the Development Management Plan 2019 which indicates that 7-8 car parking spaces would be appropriate for a development of this scale.

14. The standards in Annex 4 have been adjusted from the County Council's standards to better reflect the Reigate and Banstead Borough context and that the justification for requiring additional spaces beyond 1 per unit is to make provision for visitors to the proposed development. It is also relevant that the standards apply borough wide, so are not locally specific to the area of the appeal site, and may be varied to take into account specific local circumstances. The ability to vary the standards based on local conditions is reflected within the wording of Policy TAP1. I also note that findings of the Appellants parking impact report, although this is contradicted somewhat by the views of interested parties about the highway conditions close to the site.

15. I note that the site is close to a local bus route and also within reach of some day to day services and within walking distance of Reigate town centre. Given these factors and the minimal nature of the shortfall in off street parking provision proposed I conclude that the 6 off street parking spaces proposed is acceptable and that the proposed development would not result in unacceptable harm.

16. Consequently, I do not find conflict with Policy TAP1 of the Reigate and Banstead Development Management Plan 2019 seeks to ensure that development includes car parking in line with local standards unless unless satisfactory evidence is provided to demonstrate that non-compliance would not result in unacceptable harm.

Other Matters

17. Letters from interested parties, including in support of the proposed development, are noted. The matters relating to the main issues are discussed above. Other matters raised to not have an effect on my findings.

Conclusion

18. For the above reasons the appeal is dismissed.

D.R. McCreery

INSPECTOR