
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 11 August 2020

by O S Woodward BA(Hons.) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 08 September 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/Y3615/W/20/3251096

8 Abbotswood Close, Guildford GU1 1XA

- 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 Nick East against the decision of Guildford Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 19/P/01540, dated 5 September 2019, was refused by notice dated 30 October 2019.
 - The development proposed is the demolition of a double garage, and the erection of a new dwelling, and parking for the existing 8 Abbotswood Close and the new dwelling
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the area, and whether the proposal would preserve or enhance the setting of the Abbotswood Conservation Area.

Reasons

3. The appeal site is a 2-storey detached dwelling and associated single storey garage. It is within a suburban area characterised by 2-storey detached dwellings, of varied architectural design. The houses are predominantly set in fairly spacious plots with generous spacing and planting to their boundaries, including the relatively new dwelling, 'Elise', on the opposite side of the road. The buildings are sometimes relatively close, but this is either on a corner plot where the flank walls are at angles to one another, or the element closest to the boundary is smaller scale, such as a 1-storey garage.
4. This part of Abbotswood Close is laid across a fairly steep hill and each plot, including the appeal property, has sloped front gardens and driveways that work with the slope and lead either up to, or down to, the houses and their garages. This landscaping approach positively contributes to the character and appearance of the area. Another example of the existing development working with the contours of the hill is the Elise property, which is located on the hill at the point where it starts to rise and its height helps to bridge the ridge line between the two adjacent properties.
5. The proposed dwelling would be much narrower than the neighbouring properties. This would be accentuated by the 2 and a half-storey appearance created by cutting into the slope to provide the off-street parking spaces at the same level as the road. It would be located close to the host dwelling and the

- existing dwelling to the other side, on a relatively small plot, with the tall flank walls directly facing one another. The remaining plot for the host property would also become relatively narrow such that both plots and properties would feel cramped. The proposed parking spaces to both the proposed property and the host dwelling would not reflect the natural slope of the land and would create largely hardstanding front garden areas. All of these factors would be out of keeping with the character of the area and would harm the street scene.
6. The site is adjacent to the Abbotswood Conservation Area. The significance of the nearby part of the conservation area is derived from fairly large detached properties set in generous plots with substantial gardens. The part of Abbotswood Close the appeal site is located on sits outside the conservation area, but the layout reflects the generous spacing between the dwellings. The proposed building would infill almost the entire width of one of these characteristic gaps between dwellings in Abbotswood Close.
 7. The appeal site is set down the slope from the conservation area and there is also a border with significant planting and tree growth separating the appeal site from the conservation area. I acknowledge that these factors combined partially mask the appeal site from views from within the conservation area, limited the effect on its setting. However, the proposed development would still be visible to some degree, particularly the prominent top floor, and it would therefore harm the setting and the significance of the conservation area.
 8. I assess that the harm to the setting of the conservation area would be less than substantial, as defined in Paragraph 193 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework). Paragraph 196 of the Framework states that this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.
 9. In this regard, the public benefits from the proposed dwelling would include temporary economic benefits during construction, and long-term benefits from the additional use of local services by the future occupants of the dwelling. The new house would also contribute to the Council's housing land supply and would introduce a relatively small dwelling for the area thereby increasing choice of house types. However, the benefits would be limited because only one dwelling is proposed. The proposal would also create more easily accessible off-street parking for both the proposed and existing dwelling, thereby likely reducing on-street parking. However, the existing site provides 2 off-street parking spaces and the slight improvement to accessibility of off-street spaces is only of limited benefit.
 10. As set out in Paragraph 193 of the Framework, I place great weight on the less than substantial harm that I have identified, and this outweighs the limited public benefits.
 11. Overall, the proposal would harm the character and appearance of the area, and would not preserve or enhance the setting of the Abbotswood Conservation Area. The proposal therefore fails to comply with the relevant parts of Policies G5, H4, and HE10 of the Guildford Borough Local Plan 2003, and Policy D1 of the Guildford Borough Local Plan: Strategy and Sites 2015-2034, adopted April 2019 which, amongst other criteria, seek development in character with its surrounding area including with regard to landscaping, parking, detailed design, layout, scale, proportion and form. They would also fail to comply with Chapters 12 and 16 of the Framework which, amongst other criteria, seek high quality design and the protection of heritage assets.

Other Matter

12. The site falls within the Zone of Influence of the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area, a European Designated Site. Had the proposal been acceptable in planning terms, it would have been necessary for me to have undertaken an Appropriate Assessment (AA) as the competent authority. However, the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 indicates this is only necessary where the competent authority is minded to approve planning permission, so I have therefore not undertaken an AA.

Conclusion

13. For the reasons above, I conclude that the appeal be dismissed.

O S Woodward

INSPECTOR