



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 17 August 2020 by Mariam Noorgat BSc (Hons)

Decision by Andrew Owen BA (Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 11 September 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/R3650/W/19/3243387

Land to the rear of Robins Wood, Land off Old Compton Lane, Farnham GU9 8EL

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mr W Eagle against the decision of Waverley Borough Council.
 - The application Ref WA/2018/2255 dated 19 December 2018 was refused by notice dated 13 September 2019.
 - The development is the erection of two new 5 bedroom dwellings together with associated works.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Appeal Procedure

2. The site visit was undertaken by an Appeal Planning Officer whose recommendation is set out below and to which the Inspector has had regard before deciding the appeal.

Procedural Matter

3. The appellant submitted a revised plan within their appeal submission which altered Unit 1 to remove the family room and so create a larger gap between the two proposed units. Though some neighbours may not have seen this alteration, as it removes part of the built form and is fairly minor in scale with limited visibility beyond the site, I do not consider any interested party would be prejudiced by my acceptance of the plans.

Main Issue

4. The main issue is the effect of the proposed siting of the development on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons for the Recommendation

5. The site comprises an undeveloped plot of land on the east side of old Compton Lane. Although the site is situated within the designated built up area of Farnham, which is one of the Council's foci for development, its immediate surroundings are semi rural with houses dispersed sparingly amongst large open spaces, gardens and woodland. Most of the detached houses in the area, particularly those close to the appeal site, are set in spacious plots which provides significant separation between them. This creates a low-density, spacious characteristic.

6. The two proposed houses would be sited in a tandem arrangement with the single access point being shared. The driveway would serve unit 1 at the front and then pass alongside it to serve unit 2 at the rear. Although the amended plans show a larger space between the two units than originally proposed, this gap would be significantly smaller than the gaps generally found between other detached houses in the area.
7. As Unit 2 would be sited behind Unit 1, it would not be readily visible from in front of the site. However, the shared access would be indicative of the tandem layout of the development. Furthermore from neighbouring houses to the north, and also possibly from positions further north on Old Compton Lane, the tandem arrangement would be plainly apparent. This arrangement, and in particular the close proximity of the units to each other, would result in a visibly cramped development which would contrast with the more spacious settings of the other detached dwellings in the immediate vicinity.
8. It is recognised there are examples in the wider area of backland development. However, those houses at 12 and 12a Old Compton Lane appear as part of the more built up part of Farnham and are not comparable. Also, though I note No.55 sits behind No.57, they do not share an access and so appear as two distinct dwellings with different set backs, rather than a frontage unit accompanied by a unit behind. Other examples highlighted by the appellant appear as small groups of houses set at the end of an access, such as at Kiln Cottage and Culverwood. None of these examples, and indeed none of the other houses in the area, are arranged in a tandem layout with one house positioned closely behind a frontage house.
9. I accept that the front elevation of Unit 1 would be visible from the road but setback a considerable distance, in a slightly sunken position, and partially screened by trees, which would be supplemented by additional planting as indicated on the plans. As such it would not strongly influence the street scene. However, there are many houses in the area which also do not actively contribute to their respective street scenes, such as Pinewood on Moor Park Way to the north east of the appeal site, or Overwood House further south on Old Compton Lane.
10. Nonetheless, due to the proposed arrangement of the two houses on the site, the proposal would be incongruous in its immediate context and so would be significantly harmful to the character and appearance of the area.
11. It therefore would conflict with Policy TD1 of the Waverley Borough Local Plan Part 1 Strategic Policies and Sites, February 2018, Policy FNP1 of the Farnham Neighbourhood Plan, May 2017, and Saved Policies D1 and D4 of the Waverley Borough Local Plan, 2002, all of which seek to ensure developments respond and respect the distinctive local character of the area. Conflict is also found with The Farnham Design Statement which seeks to ensure developments respect the architectural surroundings in terms of pattern and scale. Further, the proposed development would fail to adhere to Paragraph 127 of the National Planning Policy Framework which seeks to ensure developments are sympathetic to the local character.

Other Matters

12. There is dispute between the parties as to the Council's ability to demonstrate a five years housing land supply. The Council suggest a 5.9 years supply based

on the Housing Delivery Test results published in February 2020, and the appellant points to appeal decisions in March 2020 which indicate figures of 3.9 and 4.5 years supply. Both of these appeal decisions were reached following events where both parties presented evidence, including the progress of various housing developments in the Borough at that time. I do not have any evidence from the last 6 months before me so cannot reach a robust conclusion on this matter. Nevertheless, even if I were to conclude there is a shortfall in the five year housing land supply on the scales suggested by the appellant, the adverse impacts of granting permission, in terms of the harmful effect on the character and appearance of the area, would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefit of one additional house to add to the Council's supply.

Recommendation and Conclusion

13. For the reasons set out above, and having had regard to all other matters raised, I recommend the appeal is dismissed.

Mariam Noorgat

APPEAL PLANNING OFFICER

Inspector's Decision

14. I have considered all the submitted evidence and the Appeal Planning Officer's report and on that basis the appeal is dismissed.

Andrew Owen

INSPECTOR