

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 6 October 2020

by D Cramond BSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 21 October 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/R3650/W/20/3248760

Land to the East of Ivy House, The Street, Dockenfield, Surrey, GU10 4HU

- 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 ABL Homes against the decision of Waverley Borough Council.
 - The application Ref WA/2019/1801, dated 24 October 2019, was refused by notice dated 7 February 2020.
 - The development proposed is the erection of a detached dwelling with associated parking.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the development on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

3. The appeal site is a small field of about 0.16 Ha which is located in a part of Dockenfield with large properties to either side, undeveloped land to the rear and a mix of homes and a church opposite. The scene is rural in character and attractive in appearance. The appeal proposal is as described above and would provide a traditionally styled two storey detached home with about 190 sqm of habitable floor space.
 4. The appeal site lies within an Area of Great Landscape Value (AGLV) and is classed in local policy terms as Countryside beyond the Green Belt. The site is part of a looser area of Dockenfield which on its side of the road is not included in any settlement boundary. There is no encouragement in principle under the Council's Spatial Strategy for new housing in this nature of locality, quite the opposite, as evidenced by Policy SP2 of the Waverley Borough Local Plan Part 1 2018 (2018 LP). Under Policy RE1 of the 2018 LP the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside will be recognised and safeguarded.
 5. In the context of AGLV, Policy RE3 of the 2018 LP underlines that new development must respect the character of the landscape in which it is located, whilst Policy TD1 calls for development to be in character with its surroundings. Saved Policies D1 and D4 of the Waverley Borough Local Plan 2002 are also pertinent. Taken together and amongst other matters the foregoing policies seek to ensure that development is of high quality design, protects the character and appearance of an area, and reflects local distinctiveness
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6. The scene at and beyond the appeal site is an attractive bucolic one. The erection of a dwelling here, even with a traditional design, landscape works and inherent spaciousness to boundaries, would markedly change this. Open landscape pleasingly presently predominates and that balance would alter with the built form of the planned property itself and its associated domestic paraphernalia, parking and hard surfacing. There would be an unfortunate shift towards a more suburban scene. There would be detriment to the landscape character and natural beauty of the AGLV from the proposed structure and associated works.
7. Even if it had been encouraged in terms of any planning policies I would not describe the appeal site as a residential infill plot; the development locally is too loose and the extent of land too great to meet such a definition in my mind. This site is rightly deemed by the Council to be open countryside. I am not persuaded by the scheme before me that the site is suited to a new dwelling in an overall aesthetic sense.
8. Given all the circumstances I conclude that there would be conflict with the policies I cite in paragraphs 4 and 5 above in terms of the main issue.

Other matters

9. I confirm that all relevant policies in the National Planning Policy Framework have been considered in their own right and that the development plan policies which I cite mirror relevant objectives within that document. Sustainable development comprises the well-rehearsed environmental, social and economic objectives.
10. Full detail on Housing Land Supply is not before me and the Appellant argues for under the five year mark while the Council makes a case that it is presently over this number. In any event the contribution from one dwelling to supply would be minimal whilst the policy conflict on the environmental front in local and national policy terms is marked.
11. I recognise that there is no access safety, tree matters or technical issues which would cause difficulty. The development would increase housing supply in the area and provide an economic and social benefit proportionate with the delivery of one house. These are matters of weight in favour of the appeal; however they do not outweigh the harm that I have found in this instance. The harm to environmental objectives is such that the proposal cannot be deemed sustainable development.
12. I appreciate that the Appellant sought to take cognisance of a previously failed application (WA/2014/1465) and appeal (APP/R3650/W/14/3000883) by re-appraisal of the proposal to formulate the current scheme which, in summary, is a smaller traditional dwelling than previously proposed. However I would comment that, contrary to the Appellant's view, I am not persuaded that all the previously expressed concerns have been fully addressed. My reading of the decision is that it was not only the size of the property proposed at that time which was the determining issue but that the openness of the site itself was a very important factor as was the question of achieving sustainable development in locational and other terms. In any event I have to deal with the appeal proposal before me on its own merits.

13. I have carefully considered all the points raised by the Appellant but these matters do not outweigh the concerns which I have in relation to the main issue identified above.

Overall conclusion

14. For the reasons given above I conclude that the appeal proposal would have unacceptable adverse effects on the character and appearance of the area. Accordingly the appeal is dismissed.

D Cramond

INSPECTOR