
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 29 September 2020

by Adrian Hunter BA(Hons) BTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 29th October 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/A3655/W/20/3252519

Homeleigh, Guildford Road, Woking GU22 7UP

- 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 Nicolo Zummo against the decision of Woking Borough Council.
 - The application Ref PLAN/2019/1210, dated 11 December 2019, was refused by notice dated 6 February 2020.
 - The development proposed is new building containing six apartments following demolition of bungalow and detached double garage.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues in this appeal are:
 - The effect of the proposal upon the character and appearance of the area; and
 - The effect of the proposal upon the living conditions of future residents, with particular regard to the outlook from the bedroom window of Flat 1.

Reasons

Character and appearance

3. The appeal site comprises a corner plot located at the junction of Guildford Road and Wych Hill Lane. It is occupied by a detached bungalow and a separate double garage, with vehicular and pedestrian access being from Guildford Road. The surrounding area is predominately residential. On the opposite side of Guildford Road, are a number of substantial detached properties, which are located within the Mount Hermon Conservation Area.
4. The proposed development would involve the demolition of the existing buildings on site and the erection of a two-storey block accommodating 6 apartments. Five parking spaces would be provided, alongside secure, covered cycle parking and communal open space for future residents.
5. With regards to the relationship with Wych Hill Lane, the proposed building would occupy a similar position to the existing bungalow on site. In contrast however, the proposed building would be higher, bulkier and of a greater mass than the building to be replaced. Therefore, due to the additional bulk and mass of the proposed building, in combination with its position beyond The

Beeches when viewed from the east, the proposed development would discordantly project beyond the neighbouring dwelling and would appear as an incongruous feature within the street scene. Furthermore, the elevation visible in these views, would appear as a large and relatively featureless addition to the street scene, out of keeping with the character and appearance of nearby properties.

6. There is some existing landscaping, which would screen some elements of the development when viewed from this direction, however this would appear to be outside of the control of the appellant. In any event, even considering the contribution of this landscaping, the proposal would still be visible within the street scene and would represent a form of development that would harm the character and appearance of the area.
7. The overall height of the building would be similar to those of surrounding properties. In contrast to nearby dwellings, the proposal would include the provision of a crown roof, with slightly lower eaves than the adjoining dwelling. However, due to the articulation of the western and southern elevations, this would not appear out of keeping with the general character and appearance of the area. In this regard, I note the substantial size of the properties on the western side of Guildford Road and consider that, the overall design and appearance of the building, would be in keeping with the pattern and nature of development to the west. Furthermore, landscaping around the boundary of the site would be retained and, whilst this would not screen the development, it would further reduce its impact. However, whilst these are positive elements of the development, when taken together in the overall balance, they do not overcome the harm caused by the proposal.
8. For the above reasons, I therefore conclude that the proposed development would harm the character and appearance of the area, and in this respect, would be contrary to Policy CS21 of the Woking Core Strategy (CS) 2012 and policies contained within the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework). These policies, amongst other things, seek to ensure that new development creates buildings that make a positive contribution to the street scene and the character of the area in which they are situated.

Living conditions

9. The bedroom window serving the ground floor Apartment 1 would face directly onto a parking space. In contrast to the spaces provided for Apartments 3,4 and 5, there would be little in the way of a landscaped or buffer area to provide separation between the bedroom window and a car parked in the space. I consider that this would offer a poor outlook from this window and residents are likely to be subject to overlooking and general disturbance from passing pedestrians and vehicles, which would be likely to harm their living conditions. Whilst this car parking space would be allocated to the occupier of Flat 1, this does not justify the harm to the living conditions to future residents that would be caused from the lack of a proper outlook. Privacy in these rooms could only be assured by the use of obscure glazing or net curtains, neither of which would provide occupiers with good living conditions given that they would constrain outlook and natural light.
10. For the above reasons, I therefore conclude that the proposed development would harm the living conditions of future residents and, in this respect would be contrary to Policy CS21 of the CS and policies contained within the

Framework. These policies, amongst other things, seek to ensure schemes provide appropriate levels of privacy.

Other Matters

11. The site is located within the 5 km buffer zone of the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area. Regulation 63(1) of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 indicates the requirement for an Appropriate Assessment is only necessary where the competent authority is minded to give consent for the proposal. Thus, given my overall conclusion on the main issues it is not necessary for me to consider this matter in any further detail.
12. My attention has been drawn to other considerations which weigh in favour of the proposals. These include the more efficient use of previously developed land within the urban area and the contribution the new dwellings would make to the overall supply of housing within the area. However, whilst these are benefits of the scheme, they would be limited given the modest scale of the development proposed and are not sufficient to outweigh the harm found from the conflict with the development plan.

Conclusion

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

Adrian Hunter

INSPECTOR