



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 15 October 2020

by N Holdsworth MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 12 November 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/L3625/W/20/3252437

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 & Mrs Carvall against the decision of Reigate & Banstead Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 20/00364/F, dated 20 February 2020, was refused by notice dated 16 April 2020.
 - The development proposed is demolition of the existing dwelling and outbuildings and the erection of a development of five flats in a two-storey building with roof accommodation together with the provision of refuse and recycling stores and five car parking spaces.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matter

2. An appeal decision was issued in relation to a larger scheme¹ on the same site in August 2020. This is a material consideration which I have taken into account in my decision.

Main Issues

3. The effect of the proposal on
 - the character and appearance of the area; and
 - the living conditions of existing neighbouring residents, with particular regard to whether or not there would be an unacceptable loss of privacy or outlook.

Reasons

Character and Appearance

4. This is a corner plot on the junction of Eastnor Road and North Road. The buildings along the road to each side of the plot are of a similar scale: residential 2 storey housing with pitched roofs. They are each of individual design and are not identical to one another, but there is a broad consistency in overall height, and a consistent building line. This is reinforced by a largely unaltered roofline with a noticeable absence of dormer windows facing the road. The gaps between these buildings also help to create a spacious

¹ APP/L3625/W/20/3244776

character. Consequently, this group of buildings can be readily distinguished from the larger, modern blocks of flats on the opposite corner.

5. The proposed building has an individual design with projecting bays, whilst utilising traditional architectural features. This design approach broadly responds to the characteristics of the plot, providing interest to its two frontages, as well as additional surveillance to the street. In terms of the eaves and the maximum overall height, the proposal would fit in with the broad prevailing range of heights found within this group of buildings. It would also respect the established building line. The small forward projection of one bay towards North Road is appropriate as it is the last building in the row and provides a degree of visual interest to the corner.
6. However, the front dormer windows would comprise a feature that is not reflected on the row of adjacent buildings to each side of the plot. In this respect, the bulk of the proposal at roof level would detract from the established character of the surrounding roofscape. A further issue arises with the overall width of the North Road frontage, particularly above ground floor level. This would noticeably exceed that of other buildings that face this road. Furthermore, the residual gap to No.3 North Road would be narrower than the gap shown between No.3 and No.5. These factors would combine, to create a building with a cramped appearance.
7. As such, whilst the design approach is not without merit, the overall scale of the proposed building means that it would relate poorly to the established character of its surroundings. Because this issue relates to the size and design of the building, it cannot be overcome through the use of planning conditions. Overall, the harm to the character and appearance of the area would be unacceptable and the proposal therefore conflicts with Policies DES1 of the Reigate and Banstead Development Management Plan (2019) and CS10 of the Reigate and Banstead Core Strategy (2014) which, amongst other things, seek to ensure that new development is of a high standard of design and has a positive relationship with its surroundings.

Living Conditions

8. The proposed building would replace an existing building on the site. The additional bulk associated with the new building would largely be located on the North Road facing elevation. It would be set a sufficient distance away from the site boundaries from the neighbouring gardens to avoid any significant overbearing impact or sense of enclosure to these residential properties.
9. The properties and gardens to the rear of the site along both North Road and Eastnor Road already experience a degree of mutual overlooking, as noted by the previous planning Inspector. In this proposal there would be additional windows to the rear of the building, above ground floor level. However, the appellant advises that there would only be one clear glazed window facing No.2 Eastnor Road² on the upper floors of the building. Overall, given the separation distances and degree of existing mutual overlooking, there would be no significant loss of privacy arising from this development.
10. In conclusion, the proposal would not have a harmful effect on the living conditions of occupiers of neighbouring properties, either through loss of

² Paragraph 5.16 of the appeal statement.

privacy or outlook. There is no conflict with Policy DES1 of the Reigate and Banstead Development Management Plan 2019 which requires that new development should not adversely impact upon the amenity of occupants of existing nearby buildings.

Other Considerations and Conclusion

11. I have considered this case on its merits, but my conclusions on both main issues are consistent with the previous appeal decision on the site. The reduction in bulk and design changes compared with the earlier scheme is not sufficient to overcome the harm identified by the Council, reflected in the first main issue and previously supported at appeal.
12. The Council make reference in the officer report to the limited size of the amenity space provided for future occupants of the development, and its proximity to the road. Whilst the spaces are small, they are sufficient to provide a degree of functional external space, which could be used by future residents to sit out. This is not a significant flaw in the scheme that would justify withholding planning permission. Neither this, nor the other issues raised by interested parties in their objections to the proposal, add to the harm identified in the first main issue.
13. The proposal would provide an increase in the amount of residential accommodation on the site, providing good living conditions for future occupants. It would also make efficient use of land for housing, within an existing settlement, in an accessible location for services and facilities. In this respect, there is support for the proposal in other local planning policies³, as well as the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework). As a small site, it could be delivered quickly, with associated economic benefits. These considerations weigh in favour of the proposed development. However, the proposal would relate poorly to its surroundings due primarily to its size. It would therefore conflict with the objective, set out in the Framework, of achieving well-designed places.
14. Consequently, the considerations that weigh in favour of the proposal do not, even cumulatively, outweigh the harm identified in the first main issue. The proposal conflicts with the development plan, when it is considered as a whole, and there are no other considerations that outweigh this conflict. As such, whilst the proposal would be acceptable in terms of its effect on the living conditions of existing residents, there would be unacceptable harm to the character and appearance of the area. For this reason, the appeal should be dismissed.

Neil Holdsworth

INSPECTOR

³ As identified by the appellant in the appeal statement.