
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 10 November 2020

by Michael J Muston BA(Hons) MPhil MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government

Decision date: 20 November 2020.

Appeal Ref: APP/M3645/D/20/3249332

10 Timber Lane, Caterham CR3 6LZ

- 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 Ian Read of Nordic Estates against the decision of Tandridge District Council.
 - The application Ref TA/2020/21, dated 22 November 2019, was refused by notice dated 5 March 2020.
 - The development proposed is the demolition of part of a front/flank wall and the building of a replacement wall section on a different line.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for the demolition of part of a front/flank wall and the building of a replacement wall section on a different line, at 10 Timber Lane, Caterham CR3 6LZ, in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref TA/2020/21, dated 22 November 2019, subject to the following conditions:
 - 1) The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than three years from the date of this decision.
 - 2) The materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of the development hereby permitted shall match those used in the existing dwelling.
 - 3) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: OS Rev A, S2-1, S2-2.

Main issue

2. The main issue in this case is whether the resulting dwelling would provide acceptable living conditions for occupiers, with particular regard to the size of the unit and the bedroom.

Reasons

3. The proposal involves a reduction in size of the existing ground floor bedroom. Minimum dwelling and room sizes are contained in the "*Technical housing standards – nationally described space standard*" (HS) published by the Department for Communities and Local Government in March 2015. This document is not part of the development plan, but does constitute a material consideration in this case.

4. The HS recommends that in order to provide one bedspace, a single bedroom should have a floor area of at least 7.5 square metres, whilst to provide two bedspaces, the bedroom should have a floor area of 11.5 square metres. It goes on to set out the recommended minimum gross internal floor areas (GIA) for dwellings. The recommended GIA is larger for two storey dwellings, to allow for the space taken up by a staircase, and is a minimum of 58 square metres for a one bedroom, two person dwelling. This compares to a minimum of 50 square metres if the same dwelling is single storey and a minimum of 37 square metres for a one bedroom, one person dwelling with a shower room, when all the accommodation is on one floor.
5. The Council has calculated that the existing dwelling has a GIA of 46.4 square metres and that, were the proposal to go ahead, this would reduce to 45.6 square metres. The Council does not say how large it considers the bedroom to be, although it does say the proposal would reduce its floor area by 2.2 square metres. The appellant disputes this figure, and says that the reduction in the floor area of the bedroom would amount to 1.57 square metres, and result in the bedroom measuring 7.43 square metres.
6. Neither the existing bedroom, nor the smaller one that would result from the appeal scheme, meet the standard in the HS for a two bedspace room. Instead, both measurements place the bedroom around the minimum size in the HS for a one bedspace bedroom. It seems to me that this dwelling, given the small size of the bedroom, is likely to be inhabited by one person rather than two. The HS do not include a size for a one person, one bedroom dwelling on two storeys, probably because such dwellings are not commonly constructed. Nonetheless, it is what exists on the appeal site, both as existing and as proposed.
7. The curved wall in the appeal proposal would make using the room more difficult. However, a single bed would still fit within the room, although a double bed might not. This confirms my view that the resulting dwelling would be very likely to be occupied by one person rather than two.
8. The dwelling that would result from the appeal proposal being implemented would have a GIA of 45.6 square metres, larger than the minimum GIA in the HS for a one person, one bedroom dwelling on one storey. I appreciate that this is not what is proposed on the appeal site, which is a two storey building. Nonetheless, it gives an indication that the resulting dwelling would provide a large enough bedroom, and large enough unit as a whole, for its likely single occupier, both now and in the future.
9. I conclude that the resulting dwelling would provide acceptable living conditions for occupiers, with particular regard to the size of the unit and the bedroom, and would comply with Policy DP7 of the Tandridge Local Plan Part 2: Detailed Policies (2014), which, amongst other things, seeks a satisfactory environment for occupiers of existing and new development.

Conditions

10. In addition to the standard time condition, another listing the submitted plans is required, to provide certainty as to what has been approved. I also agree that a condition requiring matching external materials is needed, to ensure that the character and appearance of the area is preserved.

Conclusion

11. For the reasons given above, I conclude that the appeal should be allowed and planning permission should be granted subject to the conditions.

Michael J Muston

INSPECTOR