
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 19 January 2021

by Adrian Hunter BA(Hons) BTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 12th February 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/Y3615/W/20/3261190

1 Ash Lodge Close, Ash, Aldershot GU12 6JU

- 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 Chris Foster of Springer Foster Properties Ltd against the decision of Guildford Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 20/P/00511, dated 19 March 2020, was refused by notice dated 7 September 2020.
 - The development proposed is erection of two storey, three bedroom house with associated parking.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. For the purposes of precision and clarity, I have taken the description of development from the Council's Decision Notice.

Main Issue

3. The main issue in this appeal is the effect of the proposal upon the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

4. The appeal site comprises part of the existing rear and side garden of No 1 Ash Lodge Close. It occupies a corner position within the estate, as such the appeal site is in a relatively prominent location within the street scene, in particular when viewed along Ash Lodge Drive.
 5. The surrounding area is predominately sub-urban in character, with a mix of styles and type of dwellings, including detached, semi-detached and terraced properties. The designs of the dwellings are varied. Properties are set back from the carriageway edge in reasonably sized plots, with good sized rear garden areas. Buildings generally fill the width of the plots. Properties have open frontages, with off-street parking provision. Landscaping to the front gardens, along with grassed verges, maintains an open feel to the street scene.
 6. The proposed development would involve the introduction of a new, two storey dwelling on the appeal site. It would be joined to the host property thereby creating a new terrace. Pedestrian access would be via the front from Ash Lodge Close, with new vehicular parking provided to the rear, adjacent to the existing garage.
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7. Due to the prominent location of the appeal site, the proposal would be clearly visible within the street scene. It would introduce a substantial new building into an area that is currently open, resulting in the reduction in the visual gap. Consequently, the addition of the dwelling would be an incongruous feature in the street scene and harmful to the character of the area. Furthermore, when compared with its surroundings, the proposed dwelling would sit within a substantially reduced plot, which would create a cramped form of development, indicative of overdevelopment of the site. As a result, the proposal would introduce a form of development which would be out of keeping with, and harmful to the character and appearance of the area.
8. The overall ridge and eaves height of the proposed dwelling, along with its visual appearance would be similar to those of the host dwelling and surrounding properties. I also note that there would appear to be sufficient space to the front to deliver adequate landscaping and retain the existing grassed verge. However, whilst these are benefits of the proposal, they do not outweigh the harm caused.
9. For the above reasons, I therefore conclude that the proposed development would harm the character and appearance of the area and, in this respect, is contrary to Policy D1 of the Guildford Borough Council Local Plan: Strategy and Sites 2015-2034, saved Policy G5 of the Guildford Borough Local Plan 2003, and Paragraph 127 of the National Planning Policy Framework. These Policies, amongst other things, seek to ensure that all new developments achieve a high quality design that responds to distinctive local character, and that it respects, amongst other things, established street patterns and plot sizes.

Other Matters

10. I have been referred by the appellant to the recently constructed dwelling, No.2A Ash Lodge Close, which lies opposite the appeal site. I have however not been provided with any details of the case, but having viewed the property during my site visit, I consider that the proposal is set well away from the carriageway edge, so to maintain the sense of openness. Neither do I consider it to be in as prominent location within the street scene as the appeal site. In any event, I am required to determine the appeal application on its merits.
11. The site is located within close proximity of the Thames Basin Heath Special Protection Area (SPA). 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 issue it is not necessary for me to consider this matter in any further detail.
12. I note the Council raised no issues in relation to access, flooding or impact on neighbouring occupiers, amongst other things. However, as these are requirements of policy and legislation, the absence of harm in respect of these matters are neutral factors that weigh neither for nor against the development.

Conclusion

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

Adrian Hunter

INSPECTOR