



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 7 April 2021

by Lynne Evans BA MA MRTPI MRICS

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 29 April 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/C3620/W/20/3262026
67 Keswick Road, Bookham KT23 4BG

- 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 Barber against the decision of Mole Valley District Council.
 - The application Ref: MO/2020/0922/PLA dated 5 June 2020, was refused by notice dated 28 July 2020.
 - The development proposed is the erection of two new dwellings following the demolition of an existing bungalow property.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matters

2. The application forms gave the applicant's name as Mr James Doddrell of James Doddrell Architect Ltd, but that was subsequently corrected to confirm that the applicants were Mr & Mrs Barber with James Doddrell acting as agent. I have shown the correct name of the applicants in the header above.

Main Issue

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

Reasons

4. The appeal site comprises a detached bungalow on the south side of Keswick Road, within a predominantly residential area. A recent development of two chalet bungalows has been completed to the rear of the site with access along the western side of the appeal property. There are three mature sycamore trees protected by Tree Preservation Order TPO/107/7/Q (TPO) at the rear of the existing appeal site which are proposed to be retained.
5. There are a wide variety of both detached houses and bungalows on both sides of the road, but there is a regular building line with most properties set back from the road with frontage planting which together with the street trees and grass verges combines to provide an attractive and verdant pattern of development.
6. Given the mix of building styles there is a varied relationship between adjoining buildings, but with a small number of exceptions, the general pattern of

development is of well-spaced dwellings on good sized plots which, together with the set back from the frontages, provides a spacious character and appearance to the local area. Although some properties are built quite close to their side boundaries and adjoining properties, the sense of spaciousness is often retained with single storey elements and garages to the side of the main dwellings.

7. The Appellant has contended that the area has changed in terms of its character and appearance in the last 20 years or so. There clearly have been developments undertaken over this period and close to the appeal site; there is now some development at depth, including to the rear of the appeal property. However, given the generally smaller scale of these properties developed in depth and the remaining depth of the gardens to the frontage properties, these developments together with other recent developments within the local area do not, in my view, detract from the spacious and verdant character and appearance of the local area.
8. The proposal would replace the existing bungalow on the site with 2 x three bedroomed houses. These would be two storey, with accommodation in the roof. Car parking would be at the front of the properties. Both properties would have single storey development to the rear of the main two storey element, opening onto rear amenity space.
9. Although attention to detailing has been incorporated particularly at the upper levels to introduce some spacing to the side, I consider that the subdivision of the existing plot into two would result in two narrow plots that would be noticeably smaller than the general pattern of plot sizes in the local area. The narrow size of the plots would be accentuated by the size of the proposed dwellings in relation to the width of the plots, including in terms of the restricted margins to the side boundaries and between the two plots.
10. The Appellant has provided density information for the two plots to show that the resultant densities would be comfortably within the range of densities found within the local area. However, I consider that this is a somewhat crude tool to use in a residential area such as this, to assess the suitability of the proposal to respect the character and appearance of the local area.
11. I consider that the combined effect of the narrow plot sizes together with the scale of the two dwellings including their narrow margins to the side boundaries would result in a cramped development that would detract from the more spacious pattern of development in the local area.
12. I therefore conclude that the proposed development would not respect but would harm the character and appearance of the local area. This would conflict with Policy CS14 of the Mole Valley Core Strategy, Policies ENV22, ENV23 and ENV24 of the Mole Valley Local Plan, Policies BKEN2 and BKH2 of the Bookham Neighbourhood Development Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework (Framework), and in particular Section 12, all of which amongst other things seek a high standard of design which respects the local context.

Other Considerations

13. I have taken into account the additional concerns raised by local residents including, amongst other matters, in relation to parking and highways impact, as well as access for emergency vehicles and impact on local infrastructure, the

future of the protected tress and impact on the amenities of neighbouring residents. I am satisfied that were there no other matters of concern and planning permission were to be granted, these matters could all be appropriately addressed through conditions and would not justify a refusal of permission. The Council and the Highways Authority also did not raise concerns in these regards, subject to the imposition of appropriate conditions.

14. There is also a reference to a breach of a covenant, but I agree with the Council that this is not a planning matter and would need to be addressed separately.
15. A comparison has been made by the Council and the Appellant to the current proposal compared with the permission granted by the Council for a single dwelling and the earlier refused scheme for two houses. However, whilst I have taken these earlier schemes into my consideration in so far as information has been made available, they do not persuade me to a different view in respect of the scheme before me.

Planning Balance and Conclusion

16. The Appellant has referenced and the Council has acknowledged that it cannot demonstrate a 5 year housing land supply. Consequently, Paragraph 11(d) of the Framework is engaged and the relevant development plan policies for housing are considered to be out-of-date.
17. Paragraph 59 of the Framework refers to the government's objective to boost significantly the supply of housing, and paragraph 68 confirms that small and medium sized sites can make an important contribution to meeting the housing requirements of an area. In this instance, the proposal would contribute one additional unit. When judged against some of the core planning principles the proposal would perform well in that there would be facilities within reasonable proximity. However, good design and creating a well designed built environment are key aspects of sustainable development.
18. In terms of its component dimensions there would be a small social benefit in providing an extra housing unit. Economic advantages would also arise from the construction and occupation of the new houses.
19. However, the harm identified to the character and appearance of the area would be significant and as a result the social and environmental roles of sustainable development would not be achieved. When assessed against the policies in the Framework taken as a whole, the adverse impacts would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits. Therefore, the proposal would not be a sustainable form of development.
20. I have found that the proposal would conflict with the development plan when taken as a whole. There are no other considerations, including the advice of the Framework, that outweigh that conflict.
21. For the reasons given above and having regard to all other matters raised, including in representations, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

L J Evans

INSPECTOR