

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 9 April 2021

by Martin Andrews MA(Planning) BSc(Econ) DipTP & DipTP(Dist) MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 19 May 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/M3645/W/20/3262169

219 Farleigh Road, Warlingham, Surrey CR2 9EL

- 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 Atri Prashad (Turnbull Land Ltd) against the decision of Tandridge District Council.
 - The application, Ref. TA/2020/823, dated 5 May 2020 was refused by notice dated 15 September 2020.
 - The development proposed is the demolition of the existing property and erection of four three bedroom semi-detached houses and one three bedroom detached chalet bungalow – all with associated access and parking.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

3. The appeal proposes the demolition of a detached bungalow and the redevelopment of the site for five dwellings in the form of two pairs of semi-detached houses fronting onto Farleigh Road and a chalet bungalow to the rear, accessed from Crewes Lane. The thrust of the Council's refusal of the proposal is that the proposal would be an overdevelopment of the site which would be harmful to the prevailing character of the area.
 4. From my visit to the site and the surrounding area I saw that the western side of Farleigh Road is a ribbon of development that backs on to the open countryside of this part of the Green Belt. Most of the properties are detached, with reasonable spacing to their flanks. And in the vicinity of No. 219 there is a noticeably more verdant character and spacious pattern of development than on the opposite side of the road, which includes properties with their front curtilages wholly paved over to accommodate parking.
 5. This different development pattern on each side of the road is clear from the OS based Site Plan submitted with the application and the existing and proposed 'development grain' plan submitted as part of the appeal. In respect of the latter it does show a larger plot coverage than at present, but the fact that the new footprint as a whole would accommodate five dwellings as opposed to the single existing bungalow is the more significant consideration.
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6. Moreover, Crewes Lane adjoins the southern boundary of the appeal site and again at my visit I was able to see that it has a semi-rural character with views from the junction with Farleigh Road to a backdrop of mature trees at the edge of the fields at the rear of the houses.
7. These aspects underline the pleasing effect of the built form on the western side of the road being largely subservient to the more rural character and appearance. I agree with the grounds of appeal that the development pattern becomes more verdant and rural from No. 231 onwards, but the character and appearance of the appeal site is such that it serves to offset the more densely housed and urban character of the opposite side of the road.
8. As regards the specifics of the proposal, the appeal scheme seeks to position two pairs of semi-detached houses along the site's road frontage. It is clear from the application plans that on a site of this width, the modest gap between each pair necessary to leave space at the side boundaries would mean that when approaching from either direction the four houses would be effectively perceived in the angled views as one building mass of a significant scale.
9. This would be especially the case because the eaves of the middle houses would almost meet and the dormers would add bulk to each roof, whilst at nearly 10m these would be tall houses. Furthermore, the effect would be intensified by the driveway tandem parking, with the potential for as many as eight cars when all the residents are at home and a predominance of hardstanding when they are not. And the visibility of the hardstanding would be far more than at the existing dwelling.
10. In terms of the proposed chalet bungalow to the rear, this would be on the site of the existing property's garage, but with its ridge height of about 8.5m a much more significant presence. Rather than retain or complement the existing verdant and semi-rural gap between No. 219 and the dwelling 'Hazelwood' to the rear of the site, the new building with its essentially cramped relationship with the four semi-detached houses would result in a more urban character for this part of the development ribbon between Farleigh Road and the Green Belt.
11. For the appellant it is argued that the Council is unable to demonstrate a five -year housing land supply as required by the NPPF 2019 and that the shortfall is acute. Small and medium sized housing sites are particularly needed in Tandridge because the extent of the Green Belt serves as a major constraint on new house building. There is nothing here that I can disagree with and indeed the principle of the site making a contribution towards the housing supply is accepted by the Council.
12. With all that said, at the heart of the main issue is the Council's view that this particular proposal is an overdevelopment of the site in conflict with its policies and the NPPF. I share this judgement and conclude that there would be particular discord with Policies DP7 & DP8 of the Tandridge District Local Plan: Part 2 – Detailed Policies 2014 and Section 12: 'Achieving Well-Designed Places' of the NPPF. This in turn means that under paragraph 11d) ii of the latter, the adverse effects of granting permission would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits when assessed against the NPPF's policies when taken as a whole.
13. For the above reasons and having taken into account all other matters raised, the appeal is dismissed.

Martin Andrews

INSPECTOR