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## Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 11 May 2021

**by Adrian Hunter BA(Hons) BTP MRTPI**

**an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State**

**Decision date: 8 June 2021**

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**Appeal Ref: APP/R3650/W/20/3265693**

**19 The Fairfield, Farnham GU9 8AJ**

- 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 Blue Infinity Group against the decision of Waverley Borough Council.
  - The application Ref WA/2020/1307, dated 24 July 2020, was refused by notice dated 9 December 2020.
  - The development proposed is erection of a block of 6 apartments with associated parking and landscaping following demolition of existing building.
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### Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

### Preliminary Matters

2. The Council's reason for refusal includes a reference to insufficient parking provision. However, as part of their submissions, the Council have confirmed that this relates to the level of development on the site, as opposed to any specific highway issues. I have therefore dealt with the appeal on this basis.
3. For reasons of precision and clarity, I have taken the description of development from the Council's Decision Notice.

### Main issue

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

### Reasons

5. The appeal site comprises a large detached property located on a bend in the highway, between The Fairfield and Bridgefield. The existing building occupies a large plot, which at its north-eastern end, slopes steeply away from the main dwelling. The surrounding area is predominately residential, with the area around the appeal site, along Bridgefield being characterised by large detached properties, set back from the road, in often long plots, with well-established landscaping and parking to the front. This gives the area a sub-urban characteristic. To the east, along The Fairfield, the nature of development differs, being of a tighter grain and consisting predominately of semi-detached and terrace properties that are generally located closer to the carriageway edge. As a result, this part has a more urban feel.

6. The proposal would involve the demolition of the existing building and its replacement with a single building containing six apartments. Parking and landscaping would be provided to the front, along with the provision of a communal garden area to the rear.
7. The proposed new building would be larger in terms of its footprint and floor area than the existing appeal dwelling. Whilst the overall height of the proposed building would not exceed the height of the existing dwelling by a significant amount, due to the span of the building across almost the entire width of the plot and its larger footprint, the new building would appear substantially larger than the existing dwelling on site and those around it. As a result, the proposal would be of a considerably greater scale, bulk and massing than the property to be demolished.
8. This additional scale, bulk and mass, when viewed within the context of the existing dwellings along the street, would disrupt the existing pattern of development. In particular, when viewed along The Fairfield and seen in the context of the adjoining property, 19A, due to the curve of the road, the side elevation of the new building would appear excessively large and visually prominent. As a result, the proposal would introduce a form of development that would discordantly rise above the adjoining dwelling and would therefore be out of scale with and harmful to the character and appearance of the immediate surrounding area.
9. Surrounding development within the immediate vicinity of the appeal site is very much sub-urban in character, with spaces and irregular sized gaps between the dwellings. Where existing dwellings fill the plots, an element of the building is often single storey or has a hipped roof, which helps to maintain a sense of space around the buildings. The appeal proposal on the other hand, would result in the erection of a gable ended building, where the 2-storey element would span almost the full width of the appeal site. Consequently, there would be less generous spacing between it and the site boundaries. Furthermore, the majority of the front of the plot would be used for car parking, access and as a turning area. In my view, this would result in a cramped appearance, indicative of overdevelopment of the site. As a result, the proposal would be out of keeping and harmful to the sub-urban character and appearance of the area.
10. The design of the properties within the surrounding area is varied and tends to reflect the age of the buildings. As a result, there is no distinct design that could be said to be typical of the area. The appeal proposal would appear as a single building, but with articulation of the footprint to respond to the bend in the road and to reflect the position of the properties either side. The appearance of the building, whilst being contemporary, seeks to reflect a number of local characteristics including chimneys and dormers, with the style and detailing of the fenestration responding to the local character. On the basis of the design approach, the resulting visual appearance would be sympathetic to, and in keeping with the surrounding area. Whilst this is a benefit of the proposal, on its own, this does not provide sufficient justification to overcome the harm identified.
11. 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 TD1 of the Local Plan, Policies FNP1 and FNP16 of the

Farnham Neighbourhood Plan, retained Policies D1 and D4 of the Local Plan 2008, the Residential Extensions SPD, the Farnham Design Statement and Paragraph 127 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

### **Other Matters**

12. The site is located within the 5 km buffer zone of the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area. 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.
13. It has been put to me by the appellant that the proposal would deliver additional new dwellings in a sustainable location, on brownfield land. I do not seek to bring this into question, however, whilst these are benefits of the proposal, I do not consider them to be of such weight as to outweigh the harm found on the main issue.

### **Conclusion**

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

*Adrian Hunter*

INSPECTOR