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## Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 7 June 2021

**by J E Jolly BA (Hons) MA MSc CIH MRTPI**

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

**Decision date: 15 June 2021**

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**Appeal Ref: APP/Z3825/W/21/3267922**

**Station Studio, 13b Station Road, Horsham RH13 5EZ**

- 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 Ms G Horton against the decision of Horsham District Council.
  - The application Ref DC/20/2194, dated 06 November 2020, was refused by notice dated 4 January 2021.
  - The development proposed is for the demolition of an existing workshop storage building and erection of a single storey one bedroom dwelling with associated works.
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### Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

### Main Issues

2. The main issues are the effect of the proposal on:
  - the character and appearance of the area, and;
  - the living conditions of future occupiers with particular reference to access, room sizes, daylight and outlook.

### Reasons

#### *Character and appearance*

3. The appeal site is a parcel of land located in a dense residential area adjacent to Horsham railway station. Other than the flats in Station Close, Station Road is predominantly characterised by older type brick and tile residential dwellings facing the road behind front-yard style set-backs. The terraced, semi-detached and detached dwellings have gardens to the rear which help to retain a sense of spaciousness in the surrounding built environment. The appeal site accommodates a pitched roof, single storey structure that is located to the rear of the sub-divided properties of 15a and 15b Station Road. The appeal building has a single door and two windows to one side which face onto 'The Bedford' car-park. The gable-ended building is accessed via a small tree and hedge-lined path to the blank side elevation of 13 Station Road. At the time of my visit the site was overgrown to the gable-end facing No 13, and the fence lining the car-park associated with the building appeared to be in disrepair.
4. The proposal is to demolish the former commercial structure/store and to construct a 'L'-shaped, single-storey, one bedroom dwelling in materials similar to the surrounding dwellings. The development would include a flat-roof and gable extension along part of the boundary with the car-park.

5. The entrance and windows to the main living space of the proposal would face the side elevation of No 13 across a modest landscaped garden space. There would be four rooflights above the living space and one above the shower room. The 'L' shaped bedroom would have two rooflights as well as a window with an outlook to the cycle storage/bin area and a high-level window in the side gable facing towards the car-park. New close boarded fencing would be erected at the boundary with the car-park.
6. The proposed development would be located in an established residential area. As such, the general principle of development on the appeal site is not at odds with the surrounding area. However, while the Appellant contends that the proposal would replace one use with another, and that a residential use would be preferable to a potential commercial use of the existing property, I find to the contrary. Indeed, notwithstanding the existing relationship with the dwellings at No 15, or the fact that any domestic paraphernalia associated with the dwelling would be consistent with a residential area, the proposal is nonetheless for a residential dwelling that would be greater in scale and mass than the host structure that would include a new flat roof and a bulky side gable extension to the car-park boundary.
7. Moreover, while the single-storey scheme has been subject to a number of revisions, following a previous application<sup>1</sup> related to the appeal site that was unacceptable to the Council, including the addition of rooflights, repositioning of the doorway/gate and revised bin and cycle storage spaces, the proposed development would nevertheless significantly erode the already limited outside space that helps to soften the built environment in this 'back-garden' type area. Consequently, the scale and mass of the proposal would be overly prominent and appear visually cramped in this well-used location next to the railway station and a car-park. Therefore, I conclude that the scale of the proposal in this specific location would be incongruous with the surrounding area.
8. Accordingly, in respect of the character and appearance of the area the proposal is contrary to Policies 32 and 33 of the Horsham District Planning Framework (HDPF) 2015, which say amongst other things, that developments shall be required to ensure that the scale, massing and appearance of the development is of a high standard of design and layout, and where relevant, relates sympathetically to its surroundings.
9. For similar reasons, the proposal does not meet the aims of Paragraph 127 (c) of the *National Planning Policy Framework* (the Framework) which requires that developments are sympathetic to local character and history, including the built environment and landscape setting.

### *Living Conditions*

#### *a) Access*

10. The submitted drawings show that it is possible to access the proposed dwelling to the side of No 13, including space for the transportation of wheelie-bins. However, I noted at my site visit that the majority of bin storage on Station Road is located in the small yards directly to the front of a property, which in turn enables easy transfer to the roadside for collection.

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<sup>1</sup> DC/19/1494

11. Indeed, in comparison the access pathway to the proposed dwelling is relatively narrow and would represent an awkward and long-winded arrangement for the purpose of the transportation of bins to the roadside, particularly for those with limited mobility and at times of inclement weather.

*b) Room sizes*

12. I acknowledge that the Appellant has confirmed that the proposal meets the nationally described space standards. However, the bedroom is of an 'L' shaped configuration. Therefore, while the overall size of the proposal is technically compliant with the required national housing standards, the shape of the bedroom is such that it is unlikely to provide a useful space adjacent to the lower window. For example, if the recessed area were to be used for high-level storage such as a wardrobe it would obscure, at least in part, the outlook from the bedroom. I note that there is a store to the other side of the proposed bedroom. However, the plans show that the store is relatively deep. As such, it is not likely to be practical or convenient to use solely as a day-to-day wardrobe. Moreover, as an alternative example, even if the relatively small area were to be used as an mini-office type arrangement, the remaining useable bedroom space, in my opinion, remains less than ideal.

*c) Daylight and outlook*

13. The proposal has fenestration to two elevations and the roof. While there is only one larger scale window opening, namely that which faces No 13 from the main living space, from the limited technical evidence before me in this respect, it is likely that the arrangement proposed will provide adequate daylight for the future occupiers during brighter times of the day or year. Nonetheless, during darker periods of the year or on dull days the smaller high-level windows are likely to create gloomy living and bedroom spaces. Furthermore, notwithstanding the high level bedroom window, a direct outlook from the property is limited to the blank side elevation of No 13. As such, the relatively narrow separation distance between the dwellings would lead to a sense of enclosure for future occupiers. I conclude therefore, that the access, room sizes and daylight and outlook of the proposal are factors which, in combination with the limited external space even for a single occupant, would harm the well-being and living conditions of the future occupants.
14. Subsequently, in respect of the living conditions of future occupiers, the proposal is contrary to Policies 32 and 33 of the HDPF, which make clear that developments shall be required to ensure that it is designed to avoid unacceptable harm to the amenity of occupiers, and Paragraph 127 (f) of the Framework which says that planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments should create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users.

**Conclusion**

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

*J E JOLLY*

INSPECTOR