
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 29 November 2021

by Martin Chandler BSc, MA, MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 14 December 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/D3640/W/21/3272508

The Annexe, 6 Mount Pleasant Close, Lightwater, GU18 5TP

- 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 Gareth Wilkins against the decision of Surrey Heath Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 20/0510/FFU, dated 15 June 2020, was refused by notice dated 17 November 2020.
 - The development proposed is Demolition of existing single storey annex and construction of a two storey attached 3 bed house 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 proposal on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

3. The appeal site is currently occupied by a large, detached dwelling, that is demonstrably older than neighbouring properties. It is a visually pleasing building that makes a positive contribution to the streetscape. However, the majority of the surrounding development consists of detached dwellings of a later and more traditional suburban form. These dwellings offer variety within their external appearance, however, they are principally detached dwellings with wide frontages that provide car parking. Site boundaries are generally defined by low level walls and enclosures, supplemented by well-maintained landscaping. Although the appeal site in its current form makes a positive contribution to the street scene, due to its height, scale, and general presence in the street, it is anomalous to the surrounding suburban development.
4. The proposal would introduce a two-storey extension to the side of the property to facilitate a new dwelling. In doing this, it would create a new semi-detached dwelling with a demonstrably narrower frontage than the prevailing pattern of development. This would be substantially at odds with the surrounding environment, and, due to its attachment to the dominant building in the street, in my judgement, this would enhance the presence of the proposed dwelling, thereby drawing attention to its anomalous form.
5. I note that permission exists for a two-storey extension of a broadly similar appearance. However, it would not simply be the specific building mass that would cause the harm identified above. Instead, it would be the obvious and

incongruous subdivision of the existing plot. For example, the plans demonstrate bolstered boundary planting to the newly created side boundary as well as parking spaces for two cars. The proposal would also provide its own front door and demonstrate all the characteristics of a newly created dwelling. Due to the width of the resultant plot, the attributes identified above would be demonstrably at odds with the prevailing development pattern. Accordingly, it would result in a visually harmful form of development that would be materially different to the approved side extension. Consequently, I find that the presence of the approved extension does not alter my findings set out above.

6. Accordingly, I conclude that the proposal would harm the character and appearance of the surrounding area. It would therefore fail to comply with Policies CP2 and DM9 of the Core Strategy and Development Management Policies (2012), Principles B1, B2 and B8 of the Lightwater Village Design Statement Supplementary Planning Document (2007), and guidance contained within the Residential Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (2017). Taken together, these seek amongst other things, high quality design that respects and enhances the local character of the environment.

Other Matters

7. The evidence before me suggests that the Council cannot currently demonstrate a five-year supply of delivering housing sites. Although this matter has not been confirmed by the Council, on this basis, Paragraph 11 of the National Planning Policy Framework would be engaged. This is the presumption in favour of sustainable development which states that planning permission should be granted unless the adverse effects of granting permission would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits.
8. In terms of benefits, the proposal would make a small contribution to local housing supply in a built-up and accessible location. This would bring economic benefits in terms of the creation of construction jobs as well as additional expenditure into the local economy. It would also be well-located to existing services and facilities. These matters all weigh in favour of the development, however, due to the scale of the proposal, the weight is limited. Set against this, the proposal would cause demonstrable and significant harm to the character and appearance of the area, a matter to which I attribute substantial weight. Accordingly, I am satisfied that the adverse effects of the proposal would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits.
9. The Council also refused planning permission based on the effect of the proposal on the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (SPA). Subsequent to this, based on the evidence before me, the appellant has provided mitigation in accordance with the Council's strategy. Had the appeal proved successful, I would have assessed the effect of the proposal on the SPA, however, in light of my findings set out above, this is unnecessary.

Conclusion

10. For the reasons identified above, the appeal should be dismissed.

Martin Chandler

INSPECTOR