



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 4 January 2022

by Oliver Marigold BSc DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 26th January 2022.

Appeal Ref: APP/N1730/D/21/3283519

7 St. Johns Close, Hook, RG27 9HW

- 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 and Mrs Soldat against the decision of Hart District Council.
 - The application Ref 21/01808/HOU, dated 28 June 2021, was refused by notice dated 14 September 2021.
 - The development proposed is part enclosure to front porch and first floor side extension.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues in this appeal are:
 - The effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of St Johns Close
 - The effect of the proposal on highway safety

Reasons

Character and appearance of St Johns Close

3. St Johns Close consists of a cul-de-sac with a mix of detached and semi-detached dwellings. The Close has a spacious, attractive suburban character formed from the position of the dwellings set back from the road, green open areas, and the gaps between properties, including at first floor level.
4. The proposal would extend number 7 St Johns Close towards number 8. The two properties are noticeably closer together than others in the street yet retain a significant gap between the second storey elements of the properties helping to maintain the spacious character of the wider street.
5. The effect of the extension as proposed would be to leave very little distance at first floor level to the boundary with number 8. This would result in a reduction in the spaciousness both between the two properties and to the wider street scene, giving a cramped feel that would harm its character and appearance. Such an effect would be exacerbated by the design of the proposal, which would maintain the existing roof ridge and would not be subservient to the form of the original dwelling.

6. The appellant has provided details of extended dwellings in the local area, in Bell Meadow Road, Church View, Oak Hanger Close and Gower Crescent. They consider that the appeal proposal is similar to or more sympathetic than extensions that have occurred to these properties. I saw these dwellings, and others, on my visit.
7. I recognise that some of the properties identified have extensions built close to the neighbouring property, with only a small gap between them, but to my mind this demonstrates the detrimental effect that such extensions can have on the street scene.
8. A number of the examples identified are of extensions with a different design, or ones with a different relationship between neighbouring properties, for instance where the host property is set well forward of the neighbour, resulting in sufficient visual separation when extended. The full history and background of the examples has also not been provided to me and the streets referred to have differing characters to St Johns Close. These factors limit the comparisons that can usefully be drawn from the examples. In any case, I have dealt with the appeal scheme on its own merits.
9. I therefore consider that the proposal would cause significant harm to the character and appearance of St Johns Close.
10. The proposal would be contrary to policy NBE9 of the Hart Local Plan (Strategy & Sites) 2032, Saved Policy GEN1 of the Hart Local Plan (Replacement) 1996-2006, Policy HK12 of the Hook Neighbourhood Plan and the aims of the National Planning Policy Framework ('the Framework'), all of which require proposals to reflect and positively contribute to the distinctive qualities of the surrounding area.

Highway safety

11. Guidance on parking requirements is provided by the Council's Parking Provision Interim Guidance (adopted August 2008), a copy of which has been provided to me. The proposal would result in the dwelling having four bedrooms, an increase from three at present. It is not disputed that the Guidance seeks 3.5 parking spaces for dwellings with four bedrooms in this location.
12. The property currently has one parking space on the driveway. There is another space within the garage that the appellant says already provides parking for one vehicle, although on the basis of the Council's Guidance its size is not large enough to constitute a recognised space.
13. No increase in parking was proposed at application stage, but at appeal stage the appellant has provided a further plan showing an additional space formed from changes to the front garden. However, this plan was not formally submitted as part of the application, and as such its effects have not been considered by the Council or other parties. Consequently, in the interests of fairness to all parties, I have made my decision on the plans that were before the Council when it reached its decision.
14. During my lunchtime site visit, I found that a few spaces were available within St Johns Close and in nearby streets. I recognise that this represents only a snapshot in time however, and I also noted the existence of waiting restrictions locally, including partially on St Johns Close, for short periods in the morning

and mid-afternoon on Mondays to Fridays, presumably in relation to the nearby school.

15. The proposal would potentially add to the demand on existing parking availability by increasing the number of bedrooms and therefore occupants. Based on the plans considered by the Council and excluding the garage, the shortfall would be in excess of two spaces from the number required by the Council's Guidance.
16. In my judgement the increase in pressure from the proposal and the extent of the shortfall would be significant. It would be likely to result in additional pressure on on-street parking, risking interruption to traffic flow and inconvenience to highway users. I therefore conclude that the proposal would cause harm to highway safety
17. As such, the proposal would conflict with Policy INF3 of the Hart Local Plan (Strategy & Sites) 2032 and Saved Policy GEN1 of the Hart Local Plan (Replacement) 1996-2006, which require that adequate parking is provided in accordance with the Council's published parking standards. It would also be contrary to Hook Neighbourhood Plan Policy HK10's objective that all new development is provided with sufficient parking spaces for the likely number of residents and visitors.

Conclusion

18. For the reasons given above and having regard to the development plan as a whole, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Oliver Marigold

INSPECTOR