



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 1 March 2022

by C Shearing BA (Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 30 March 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/M3645/W/21/3276853

Hartlea House, High Drive, Woldingham, Surrey CR3 7EL

- 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 Johnston against the decision of Tandridge District Council.
 - The application Ref TA/2020/1946, dated 24 October 2020, was refused by notice dated 26 January 2021.
 - The development proposed is 'Erection of a dwelling'.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. During the course of the appeal the revised National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) was published. There are no substantive changes relevant to the appeal before me and therefore no interested parties would be prejudiced by my consideration of the 2021 version of the Framework.
3. The appellant has submitted additional information relating to biodiversity on the site in the form of a letter which confirms that the findings of the earlier Preliminary Ecological Assessment of October 2019 remain valid. In response, the Council has removed its objection to the ecology issues surrounding the development. I shall return to this issue under Other Matters below.

Main Issues

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

Reasons

5. High Drive is characterised by large detached houses of varying character, set within verdant and spacious plots. Front boundary treatments in the road vary but comprise predominately high level hedging, punctuated by accesses to the properties. The mature landscaping and generous plots in the area contribute positively to the character and appearance, and identity, of the area.
6. Despite the distance of the proposed development from Hartlea House and from other nearby properties, the proposed dwelling would be located on a constrained site which would be smaller than the prevailing plot sizes in the surrounding area. While the new parcel of land would exceed 0.2ha as required by the Woldingham Neighbourhood Plan 2016, as a result of the combination of the proposed plot size, building footprint and the limited space which would

exist around the new dwelling, the development would appear cramped within its plot and would be at odds with the spacious character of the area. While the site area extends to the eastern edge of Long Hill, as the western end of the site is wooded and of a steep gradient, I consider the inclusion of this area does little to alleviate the cramped layout of the development.

7. Some examples of back-land development can be seen in glimpses from the road and these developments, which do not have highway frontages, form part of the character of the area. I have also had regard to some of the other plot sizes and developments in the area highlighted by the appellant, of which some are smaller than the prevailing plot sizes. However, based on the information provided these developments still appear to sit comfortably within their plots and maintain the spacious and verdant characteristics of the area. As such I consider they are not directly comparable to the appeal scheme and they do not alter my assessment.
8. In reaching this view I have had regard to the earlier appeal decision relating to the site (ref APP/M3645/W/19/3236591). Despite the additional clarifications on the plans and amendments to the extent of the hard surfacing within the development, the way in which the plot is divided and the footprint of development within it remain largely unchanged. I am therefore of the view that the concerns of the previous Inspector have not been addressed.
9. The proposals would reconfigure the existing accesses at the front of the site and would continue to provide two distinct points of access with soft landscaping between. This has been amended since the earlier appeal and this part of the proposals would adequately reflect the pattern of boundary treatments in the area. Given the presence of other narrow accesses between some properties on High Drive, I do not consider the access would be out of character with the surrounding area.
10. However, overall, due to the cramped nature of the development and its stark contrast with the established characteristics of the area, I find that it would cause significant harm to the character and appearance of the area. As such it would conflict with policies CSP18 of the Tandridge District Core Strategy 2008 and DP7 of the Tandridge Local Plan Part 2: Detailed Policies 2014, insofar as they require new development to integrate effectively with its surroundings and respect those features that contribute to local distinctiveness. There is also conflict with policies L1 and L2 of the Woldingham Neighbourhood Plan 2016 which require among other things that development retains or enhances the spacious, sylvan character of Woldingham and its setting.

Other Matters

11. I have had regard to the additional issues raised within third party comments. These include concerns relating to the impact on the living conditions of nearby occupants and highway safety. I note that these matters were assessed by the Council in their report and informed by consultation responses and the earlier appeal decision. Following my assessment and site visit I agree with the Council's conclusions.
12. Third parties have also raised concern in respect of impact on ecology and biodiversity. In light of the additional information provided by the appellant and the response of Surrey Wildlife Trust confirming that their concern had been addressed, I do not consider there to be harm to protected species subject to

imposition of relevant conditions. However, as the appeal is dismissed for reasons relating to character and appearance, this is not a matter I need to address further.

13. Concerns have been raised regarding the impact on the nearby Green Belt, however, this is not a designation which extends over the appeal site. An existing covenant has also been highlighted and this is dealt with under separate legislation.
14. The Council does not have a 5 year land supply for housing. The proposals would provide the benefit of contributing an additional dwelling to the Council's housing stock, in a location which is close to local services and public transport links. This would be a benefit of the proposed development.

Conclusion

15. I have found that the proposals would cause significant harm to the character and appearance of the area, contrary to the most relevant development plan policies.
16. In light of this significant harm, I find that the adverse impacts of granting planning permission in this instance would far outweigh the benefits of the additional housing unit when assessed against the policies of the development plan as a whole.
17. It therefore follows that the appeal should be dismissed.

C Shearing

INSPECTOR