



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 31 August 2022

by H Wilkinson BSc (Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 5th October 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/C3620/W/21/3286603

48 Dowlans Road, Bookham KT23 4LE

- 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 D Absalom of Biles & Company Estates Ltd against the decision of Mole Valley District Council.
 - The application Ref MO/2021/0184/PLA, dated 2 February 2021, was refused by notice dated 14 May 2021.
 - The development proposed is erection of two detached four bedroom houses following demolition of the existing bungalow and garage.
-

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

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

Reasons

3. The appeal property lies within a residential area characterised by a mix of house types, most of which occupy generous sized plots. The position of properties within their plots, the set back from the highway and abundance of soft landscaping creates a sense of spaciousness which positively contributes to the character and appearance of the area.
4. The plans show that the proposed dwellings would be sited 2.12 metres apart and within even closer proximity to their respective side boundary. By virtue of the positioning and loss of lateral space, the development would appear cramped. This would be further exacerbated by the vertical emphasis of the proposed building design.
5. My attention has been drawn to an annotated plan which indicates that the proposed plot width and distance between boundaries would be commensurate with a number of properties in the locality. Whilst it is acknowledged that some properties extend nearly the full width of their plots, by virtue of the open frontages of plots, varied building design, soft landscaping and visible side gaps, the overall sense of spaciousness along Dowlans Road is retained.
6. Specific mention is made of 27a and 29 Dowlans Road. Located on the opposite side of the road, these properties occupy wider plots and are set back a greater distance from the highway. Furthermore, whilst the separation distance between the properties would appear to be similar to the appeal proposal, the distance between the side elevation and boundary is greater whilst the building design

also has a horizontal emphasis and is therefore in keeping with the spaciousness of the area. The proposed development would therefore read as an obtrusive and incongruous form of development within an otherwise spacious street scene.

7. The supporting text to Policy ENV24 suggests that a distance of 2 metres between houses has historically proven insufficient on larger, estate developments resulting in cramped development. Nevertheless, the policy itself does not prescribe a minimum distance and instead requires proposals to have regard to the general space around buildings in the locality. As such, whilst mindful of Policy ENV24 and the appellant's comments in this regard, the 2 metre separation distance as referenced within the supporting text has not been determinative in this appeal.
8. Although the appeal site is not located within a designated area or within proximity of a heritage asset, the Mole Valley Local Plan requires all development proposals to be respectful of local character and appearance, nonetheless. This therefore carries limited weight.
9. Accordingly, I conclude that the proposed development would harm the character and appearance of the surrounding area. I therefore find that it conflicts with Policy CS14 of the Mole Valley Local Development Framework Core Strategy 2009, Policies ENV22, ENV23 and ENV24 of the Mole Valley Local Plan 2000 together with Policies BKEN2 and BKH2 of the Bookham Neighbourhood Development Plan 2016-2026. Amongst other aspects, these policies seek to ensure development proposals demonstrate good quality design and respect the character and appearance of the surrounding area. It would also fail to comply with the design objectives of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework).

Other Matters

10. I acknowledge that the Council's decision notice and delegated report raised no concern regarding the effect of the proposed development on highway safety or the neighbours' living conditions. Whilst having regard to these points, they do not outweigh the harm identified above.
11. I am advised by the Council that the appeal site benefits from planning permission for the erection of a pair of 4 bedroom semi-detached dwellings with new vehicular crossover. The approved plans indicate a side gap of 2.6 metres whilst the central gap is omitted by virtue of the semi-detached design. Therefore, unlike the appeal proposal, the approved scheme provides a greater degree of lateral space which is consistent with the spacious character and appearance of the area.

Planning Balance

12. The Council does not dispute the appellant's assertion that it is unable to demonstrate a five-year housing supply and confirms within their evidence that there is currently a 2.9 year supply of housing. Paragraph 11 of the Framework, directs that where relevant policies are out of date, permission should be granted unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits when assessed against the policies in the Framework taken as whole. The proposed development would utilise previously developed land and be located in an area with good access to services and amenities whilst the development would also benefit the local economy. Nevertheless, the provision

of one additional unit whilst contributing to housing supply, would make little meaningful difference to housing supply. Paragraph 130 of the Framework, amongst other aspects, seeks to ensure that development proposals are visually attractive and add to the overall quality of the area. It is considered that, when assessed against the policies in the Framework taken as a whole, the harm to the character and appearance of the area as articulated above would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits. Therefore the presumption in favour of sustainable development does not apply.

Conclusion

13. For the reasons outlined above, having regard to the development plan as a whole and all other relevant material considerations, including the Framework, the appeal is dismissed.

H Wilkinson

INSPECTOR