



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 20 September 2022

by Robert Naylor BSc (Hons) MPhil MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 10 OCTOBER 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/D3640/W/22/3296377

1 Clewborough Drive, Camberley, GU15 1NX

- 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 Paul Sculley against the decision of the Council for the Borough of Surrey Heath.
 - The application Ref 21/0787/FFU, dated 12 July 2021, was refused by notice dated 11 November 2021.
 - The development proposed is described as the "demolition of existing bungalow and commercial units to be replaced with 2 new dwellings, including alterations to landscape and parking."
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The Council has confirmed that the contribution to the Strategic Access Monitoring and Maintenance (SAMM) for the Thames Basin Heath Special Protection Area has been received and would overcome the second reason for refusal. Therefore, I have confined my assessment of this appeal scheme to the remaining reason for refusal.
3. When the original application was determined the Council acknowledged that they could not demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing sites. However, since its decision the Council published a Five-Year Housing Land Supply Report in February 2022, where the Council state that they are now able to demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing sites. The Council's current housing land supply position has not been disputed by the appellant. Consequently, the evidence before me indicates that the presumption in favour of sustainable development contained in paragraph 11(d) of the National Planning Policy Framework 2021 (the Framework) is not engaged.

Main Issue

4. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the surrounding area with specific regard to the Hedged Estates Character Area (HECA).

Reasons

5. The appeal site occupies a corner plot at the junction of Clewborough Drive and Roundway in Camberley. The surrounding area is residential with mainly detached and link-detached properties located on generous, verdant plots. The

properties vary between one and two storey buildings and there is an eclectic mix of styles and materials in the locality. The topography of the site slopes up and away from the rear of the bungalow to the northeast, creating a well vegetated and verdant verge along the northeast flank.

6. The appeal site is located in the HECA as designated in the Surrey Heath Development Framework 2006-2028: Western Urban Area Character Supplementary Planning Document (WUAC SPD). The HECA identifies the area as containing generous plots accommodating detached dwellings with an enclosure of the street scene as a hall mark of the character. It identifies that the regularly shaped plots and roads, along with the hedges, create a slightly formal appearance in the street scene. The SPD encourages development where the prevailing development form of detached houses set in spacious individual enclosed plots is maintained.
7. The appeal site is currently occupied by a bungalow, and like other properties in the area has been subject to various single storey additions and extensions providing a more spread-out appearance to the footprint of developments on their plots. Despite the stretched appearance there are still various gaps between properties, albeit some wider than others, that provide glimpse views through to gardens and trees located in the rear. This provides an established gapped pattern between dwellings, affording breathing room between properties and a degree of permeability, which contributes to the area's verdant nature and is an important factor of the spaciouly sized plots in defining the character of the area.
8. The appeal site would provide 2 x two-storey units within the plot and, whilst detached and set back there would only be a modest gap between them. Furthermore, whilst the proposal is set off the boundary between the verdant verge and the boundary with No 3 Clewborough Drive on the opposite side, the gap to both would be limited. As a result, and despite the design features seeking to mitigate and break up the scale and mass, there would be no meaningful separation between the buildings, reducing visual permeability. Furthermore, given the lack of space between them, the juxtaposition between the proposed buildings and their surroundings would be awkward.
9. The appellant draws my attention to the shared driveway and the footprint of the proposed development being comparable to the existing property. The appellant also contends that, when coupled with the modest gap between the properties the proposal could be read as a single unit. However, the combined bulk and mass of the proposal would nevertheless appear cramped and out of keeping with the spacious character and appearance of the surrounding area. In coming to this view, I have taken into account the articulation and the use of alternative materials on the front elevation, to create a staggered effect in an attempt to break up the built form.
10. My attention has also been drawn to various properties that have adjoining garages and which are said to remove the prominent gaps between dwellings in Clewborough Drive. This includes the existing bungalow on the site with No 3, Nos 5 and 7, 9 and 11, and 10 and 12. However, given they are attached by single storey garages, they still maintain a visual gap at the upper floor level and therefore continue to provide a visible break at the front of these sites and maintain the area's well-spaced character. Further reference is made to an

upper floor extension at 46 Roundway that has recently been approved¹ by the Council. Whilst it is acknowledged that this development encloses the visual gap between properties at the upper floor, this is an extension to an existing dwelling and does not incorporate a new build for two houses, and thus is not directly comparable. Furthermore, this limited example does not provide an overriding influence over the character of the area or street scene.

11. The proposal seeks to retain a significant amount of the existing landscaping particularly on the north-eastern verge which could be protected during construction. However, given the constrained dimensions of the plot, and the proximity of plot 1a to the site's boundary with the verge, as the landscaping grows, potential occupants are likely to seek to cut back the trees and shrubs to secure light, to guard against damage to the building from debris and branches as well as to ensure sufficient amenity space. As such, I am concerned that compliance with a landscaping condition protecting this important vegetation could not be secured in the long term. Furthermore, securing additional soft landscaping through a condition could be problematic given the tight nature of the proposal. As such, it seems to me that landscaping on site would likely be limited as a result of the development, despite its central position, and this would further diminish the sense of green space between built form that is an important factor of the surrounding character.
12. In respect to the position of the proposal within the site, the existing bungalow already sits significantly forward of the adjoining property at No 3 and given the varied nature of the properties fronting the street scene, I find no harm from the proposal due to its forward position. I note the Council's concerns in respect to the two-storey element forward of the adjoining property and roof design, however given the overall mix and varied nature of the street scene, the development would suitably respect the character and appearance of the area in this respect.
13. Notwithstanding this, the proposed development would, for the reasons above, not respect or enhance the special and distinctive qualities of the HECA given the cramped form of development at odds with the spacious and verdant locality, and thus would harm the character and appearance of the surrounding area. Accordingly, it would be contrary to Policy DM9 of the Surrey Heath Core Strategy and Development Management Policies 2011-2028, adopted February 2012, which among other things require development to be of a high quality and to respect and enhance local character. The proposal would also fail to comply with advice contained within the Surrey Heath Residential Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document, adopted September 2017 and the WUCA SPD, which collectively seek to secure high quality development in the Borough without compromising local character, the environment or the appearance, amongst other things. The proposal would also conflict with the Framework insofar as it requires development to be sympathetic to local character and the National Design Guide in regard to responding to existing local character and identity.

Other Matters

14. The appellant highlights that there is need for new accommodation in the area, and that the windfall development would provide an additional family home

¹ Surrey Heath Planning Ref: 20/1170/FFU

within a built-up residential area, and thus would constitute sustainable development. As stated, the Council are now able to demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing sites and the presumption in favour of sustainable development contained in paragraph 11(d) of the Framework is not engaged.

15. Nevertheless, I have had regard to the above and other benefits of the appeal scheme, in that the proposal would provide an additional unit with a high standard of design and living conditions for future occupiers. Furthermore, I have no reason to disagree with the Council that the proposal would not cause harm to the living conditions of the occupiers of surrounding properties in respect of outlook, privacy and light. I am in no doubt as to the positive value of some of these matters and I recognise that the appeal proposal may well accord with various other development plan policies. However, neither the benefits of the scheme nor these other matters provide clear and convincing justification to outweigh the harm identified above.
16. The appellant also draws my attention to the principle of the development being acceptable and that the development optimises the potential of the site providing an effective and efficient use. However, neither the principle of the scheme, nor the optimal use of the site are in dispute, and it is the impacts of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the area that results in the above conclusions on the main issue.
17. I note the appellant's references to their pre-application discussions with the Council, the amendments they made and the lack of consultee objections to the scheme. However, these matters are not determinative as to the acceptability of the appeal proposal. I have therefore considered the proposal on its merits, based on the evidence before me.
18. Consequently, none of these other matters outweigh or overcome my conclusion on the main issue or negate the development's overall conflict with the Framework and development plan as a whole.

Conclusion

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

Robert Naylor

INSPECTOR