



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 8 November 2022

by N Praine BSc (Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 25 November 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/A3655/W/21/3285070

199 and 201, Goldsworth Road, Woking, Surrey GU21 6NG

- 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 Giuseppe Sole against the decision of Woking Borough Council.
 - The application Ref PLAN/2021/0236, dated 9 March 2021, was refused by notice dated 23 July 2021.
 - The development proposed is described as 2 No. two storey semi-detached dwellings with accommodation in the roof space to the rear of 199 and 201 Goldsworth Road, following demolition of existing garages and associated parking and landscaping.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The appellant has submitted a signed and dated unilateral undertaking under section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. This provides strategic management and monitoring measures, to avoid adverse effects on the Special Protection Areas of the Thames Basin Heaths. I come back to this later in my decision.

Main Issues

3. The main issues are:
 - Whether the proposal would provide adequate living conditions for future occupants, with particular reference to floorspace and outlook; and
 - The effect of the proposed development on character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

Living Conditions of Future Occupiers

4. It is common ground between the main parties that plot 1, the proposed left-hand dwelling when viewed from Wilfred Street, has a gross internal floor area (GIA) of 65 square metres. However, there is some dispute, between the main parties, as to whether plot 1 would be a two bedroom or one bedroom dwelling.
5. While one of plot 1's first floor rooms would be a study, it has not been clearly demonstrated that this study would not be capable of future conversion to a bedroom. Furthermore, separate first floor ensuite and bathroom facilities

suggests that future conversion of the study to a bedroom could easily be facilitated.

6. On this basis, plot 1 should be assessed as a two-bedroom dwellinghouse. In this case, the appellant suggests that plot 1 should be treated as a two bed 3-person dwelling, whereas the Council suggest it should be treated as a 2 bed 4-person dwelling.
7. Even if I take the appellant's suggestion, this would fall short of the minimum GIA set out in the technical housing standards – nationally described space standard by 5 square metres. While the outdoor amenity space provides external private space, it has not been clearly demonstrated that the internal floor area of plot 1 would not be cramped and difficult to fit furniture in, representing an oppressively confined form of living accommodation. This would result in unacceptable harm to future occupiers.
8. The ground floor lounge, kitchen, diner of plot 1 would be open plan served by full length glazed doors as well as additional windows either side of the glazed doors. Moreover, there would be a further window to the ground floor rear elevation serving this internal space.
9. The outlook from this room, would be into a garden and a close board fence separated a reasonable distance at the end of the proposed garden area. Beyond this fence the outlook would be predominantly open. Given this open character, I am satisfied that a meaningful outlook can be achieved from this room.
10. While I have found the outlook to be acceptable, this is a neutral matter which neither weighs for or against the proposed development. Consequently, the limited internal floorspace associated with plot 1 would have an unacceptably harmful effect on the living conditions of the future occupants. The proposal would therefore be contrary to the relevant provisions of Policy CS21 of the Woking Borough Council Core Strategy 2012 (the Core Strategy), the Woking Design Supplementary Planning Document 'Outlook, Amenity, Privacy & Daylight' 2008 and the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework). These, amongst other things, address the need for high quality design therefore respecting the living conditions of residential occupiers.

Character and Appearance

11. The appeal site is located to the rear of 199 and 201 Goldsworth Road. It would primarily be visible from Wilfred Street, however, glimpsed views are possible from the junctions with Goldsworth Road and Mabel Street. Wilfred Street principally comprises a mix of semi-detached and terraced dwellings with gable fronted roofs. The pitch of the gables vary between the properties and the dwellings feature a mix of brick with white finishes such as render, paint or cladding.
12. 1 Wilfred Street has a generous two storey side extension and there is also some variation in window design and appearance across all the dwellings within this street scene, particularly the square and bow style bay window features. Views of the side and rear elevations of the dwellings which face onto both Goldsworth Road and Mabel Street are also possible and these dwellings add additional variation to this street scene.

13. The existing plot sizes in Wilfred Street are generally long and narrow. While the width of the proposed plots would not be significantly different to what is established within the street scene, I recognise that the proposed development would feature shallower plots than the existing pattern of development. However, the depth of the proposed plots would have limited visual impact when viewed from public vantage points due to existing screening and their location.
14. The Council confirm that amenity space provision would exceed the footprint of the proposed dwellings and I also note the generous separation to the neighbouring dwellings either side of the proposed development. Consequently, due to the limited visibility within the street scene, I do not find the reduced depth of the proposed plots would be perceived as an overdevelopment or harmful to the character and appearance of the area.
15. The proposed development would feature a gable fronted roof which nods to the existing vernacular. I acknowledge the proposed roof pitch would be different to the existing roofs opposite, however, roof pitches already vary between the terrace and semi-detached dwellings in Wilfred Street. Additionally, the development would sit to the opposite side of this street and the drawings show that the height of the roof would be sympathetic to the more varied roof designs of the adjacent dwellings.
16. Given this variation in roof types, in combination with the separation distances, the proposed roof design would be experienced as a sympathetic addition to the surrounding area. Had this appeal been acceptable in all other regards, finer detailing such as material choice and detailed roof features could be agreed via conditions.
17. The recessed undercroft parking arrangement would introduce a new feature into Wilfred Street. It has been designed with header detailing above. I also note existing examples of undercroft areas in the adjoining streets. It would be well separated to immediately adjacent properties and given the variation in the street scene, the undercroft parking would add some interest to the street scene and not appear incongruous, cramped or contrived given its detailed design or its context.
18. The proposed development would be sited in place of existing hardstanding and a double garage. However, the proposed development would have a larger footprint than the existing garage. The proposed plans show replacement planting to the front and side of the proposed dwellings and had this development been acceptable in all other regards a condition to agree landscaping details could be imposed.
19. Interested parties have expressed concerns regarding the increased density of the site. However, based on my assessment above, the increased density can be accommodated without unacceptable harm to the local character and appearance of the area.
20. As a result, the development would not cause unacceptable harm to the character and appearance of the area. Accordingly, there would be no conflict with the relevant provisions of Policies CS21 and CS24 of the Core Strategy, Policy DM10 of the Woking Borough Council Development Management Policies DPD 2016, the Woking Design Supplementary Planning Documents 'Design'

2015 or the Framework. All of which seek, amongst other things, to ensure that development is sympathetic to the character and appearance of the area.

Other Matters

21. The development would offer benefits in terms of delivering 2 additional dwellings within an existing urban area with associated transport links. This would also be an effective use of land creating economic benefits during the construction phase. Nevertheless, given the relatively limited quantum of new development under consideration, the cumulative weight attributable to these benefits would be moderate.
22. I have found that the development proposed would not be harmful to the character and appearance of the area and would provide acceptable outlook to its future occupiers. Nonetheless, these are neutral matters which neither weigh for nor against the development proposal.
23. I have, however, found that the proposal would have unacceptable effects upon the living conditions of the future occupants with respect to internal floor area. The moderate benefits associated with the proposed development would not be sufficient to outweigh the harm I have identified and the conflict with the policies I have referred to above.
24. The appeal site is within influencing distance of the Special Protection Areas of the Thames Basin Heaths. I am in receipt of a signed and dated unilateral undertaking which secures strategic management and monitoring measures. However, as I am dismissing the appeal for other reasons, I do not need to carry out an appropriate assessment as required under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) and therefore do not need to consider this matter any further.

Conclusion

25. As such, the proposal is contrary to the development plan as a whole and there are no other material considerations of sufficient weight to indicate a decision should be made other than in accordance with the development plan. I therefore conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

N Praine

INSPECTOR