

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 31 October 2022

by Martin Andrews MA(Planning) BSc(Econ) DipTP & DipTP(Dist) MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 28th November 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/A3655/D/22/3304098

123 Old Woking Road, Woking, Surrey GU22 8PF

- 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 Stewart Gruffydd-Jones against the decision of Woking Borough Council.
 - The application, Ref. PLAN/2021/1289, dated 9 November 2021 was refused by notice dated 10 June 2022.
 - The development proposed is the erection of 2 x sets of entrance gates and piers, and 1.5m high fence on the Hacketts Lane frontage; erection of 2m high front boundary fence on the Old Woking Road frontage and alterations to existing accesses (part retrospective).
-

Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for the erection of 2 x sets of entrance gates and piers, and 1.5m high fence on the Hacketts Lane frontage; erection of 2m high front boundary fence on the Old Woking Road frontage and alterations to existing accesses, at 123 Old Woking Road, Woking, Surrey in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref. PLAN/2021/1289, dated 9 November 2021 and subject to the following conditions:
 - 1) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: Drawing Nos. P001; P002; P003 Rev. A; P005 Rev. A; P006 Rev. A, and with the 'Arboricultural Report To Accompany Planning Application' dated December 2021;
 - 2) Within three months of this Decision, a hard and soft landscaping scheme showing details of shrubs, trees and hedges to be planted shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The landscaping shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details within the first planting season (November – March) and maintained thereafter. Any retained or newly planted trees, shrubs or hedges which die, become seriously damaged or diseased or are removed or destroyed within a period of five years from the date of planting shall be replaced during the next planting season with specimens of the same size and species unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the development on the character and appearance of the area. I note that the Council's decision refers only to
-

character, but in this case it is clear that the appearance of the site from the public realm is a major determinant of its character.

Reasons

3. I saw on my visit that the appeal property is located on one of the two corners of the Old Woking Road and Hacketts Lane junction. The officer's report explains that this falls within Character Zone 1 as defined in the Pyford Neighbourhood Plan 2017 and comprises '*larger detached houses in substantial sylvan settings, generally with roads having grass verges and mature landscaping*'. Policy BE3 of the Plan seeks to safeguard this character and appearance, whilst Policies CS21 and CS24 of the Woking Core Strategy 2012 are also referred to in the Council's Notice of Refusal as being contravened.
4. The appeal proposal affects two road frontages which are quite different in character. Old Woking Road has greater plot widths and the buildings set further back from the road, with the intervening area characterised by dense shrubbery and large trees. However, there are several properties that have a close-boarded fence erected hard to the pavement edge.
5. The appellant has also erected a close-boarded boundary fence as part of the proposal, but crucially set back from the pavement with a hedge planted along its length. When the hedge grows to the height of the fence or higher, I consider that the boundary treatment will be in keeping with the prevailing character and appearance of the road.
6. As regards Hacketts Lane, this has a more open frontage with a more intensive development pattern. There is clearly more potential for harm to be caused along this road by the type of frontage treatment proposed in this appeal. However, given their corner position with Old Woking Road I consider that both the appeal property and No. 1 opposite are of a transitional nature. The rather different character and appearance of Old Woking Road turns the corner into Hacketts Lane and in this context I note that No. 1 has a degree of enclosure with a frontage post and rail fence.
7. In my view the 1.5m high wooden fence with the hedge planted in front of it and complemented by the grass verge provide an attractive boundary treatment which is appropriate for this corner site with its transitional character. The arguments in favour of the proposed pillars and gates are more finely balanced, but their design is of a high standard. And with brickwork that, as indicated, would harmonise with that of the dwelling I consider on balance that the proposal would be acceptable.
8. Overall, I conclude that there would be no harmful conflict with the Council's policies as summarised in paragraph 3 above. I shall therefore allow the appeal and grant planning permission. A condition requiring the development to be carried out in accordance with the approved plans is needed for the avoidance of doubt and is in the interests of proper planning. A landscaping condition will ensure that the development remains in keeping with the verdant character and appearance of the site and its surroundings.

Martin Andrews

INSPECTOR