



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 2 November 2022

by Hannah Guest BSc (Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 13 December 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/A3655/W/22/3291444

Little Copse, Pyrford Road, Woking GU22 8UF

- 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 E Nigrelli against the decision of Woking Borough Council.
 - The application Ref PLAN/2021/1058, dated 28 September 2021, was refused by notice dated 24 November 2021.
 - The development proposed is described as 'erection of a detached dwelling on land to the west of Little Copse, Pyrford Road, new vehicular access off Hare Hill Close and associated subdivision of the plot, parking and landscaping'.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are:
 - the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area; and
 - whether the proposal would have an adverse effect on the integrity of the Thames Basin Heath Special Protection Area (TBHSPA).

Reasons

Character and Appearance

3. Little Copse is a large, detached dwelling located on the corner of Pyrford Road and Hare Hill Close. It fronts Pyrford Road and is set back from the highway on a generous plot. The proposal is for a detached dwelling sited at the far end of the rear garden of Little Copse. The rear garden runs adjacent to Hare Hill Close and, given the proposed dwelling would front the close, it would relate to Hare Hill Close rather than Pyrford Road.
4. Although the houses on Hare Hill Close vary in their form, style, and materials, they are predominantly large, detached houses set back from the highway, which provides a sense of spaciousness. Most are two-storey, including some chalet style bungalows with rooms in the roof. Front gardens tend to be laid to lawn with areas of hardstanding for parking. Grass verges, street trees, soft front boundary treatments and large mature trees within the rear gardens, together with the set back of the properties and consistent spacing between them creates an open and verdant character.

5. The proposed dwelling in terms of its form, appearance and materials would reflect other properties on Hare Hill Close. Also, despite the neighbouring properties being mostly 2-storey, the single storey scale of the proposed dwelling would be in keeping with the bungalow opposite and would, therefore, not appear out of character. However, while the spacing between the proposed dwelling and its neighbour would be consistent with the street scene, the overall size of the proposed dwelling is small compared to other properties in the area. It would be sat on a contextually very small, shallow, and narrow plot, positioned quite far forward therein and almost fill its width. It would therefore appear cramped and would diminish the area's spaciousness.
6. The bungalow opposite, No. 39 Hare Hill Close, appears to fill the width of its plot. However, the footprint of the bungalow is much larger than the proposed dwelling, as is the overall size of its plot. No. 39 also has a large side garden adjacent to Pyrford Road and is set back relatively far from the highway, which adds to the spaciousness of the area.
7. Furthermore, while the exact distance that properties on Hare Hill Close are set back from the highway varies, these distances follow the curve in the highway. The proposed dwelling would project a significant distance forward of the front elevation of the neighbouring property, 1a Hare Hill Close. Despite it being set behind the side elevation of Little Copse, given it would be positioned on a straight section of highway where the houses opposite are set back a consistent distance, the projection forward of 1a Hare Hill Close would make it appear incongruous in the street scene and would not be in keeping with the existing pattern of development.
8. The appellant's statement describes the proposed dwelling as having a landscaped frontage. No details of this have been provided and the submitted plans show the front garden to be laid to lawn with some modest planting close to the front elevation of the proposed dwelling. Nevertheless, whether or not an appropriate landscaping scheme could be secured by condition, and even if the exact plot depth was not visible from the street, the cramped nature of the site would still be apparent for the reasons discussed above. It would also be emphasised by the proximity of Little Copse and the neighbouring house Aisling, which would be visible behind the proposed dwelling in views from Hare Hill Close.
9. The proposal would result in a shallower plot for Little Copse. However, given the generous size of the existing plot, even after subdivision, the plot would be a good size and would continue to comfortably accommodate Little Copse. It would also be in keeping with other properties in the area.

For the reasons above, the proposal would result in a cramped and contrived form of development that would harm the character and appearance of the area. It would therefore conflict with policies CS21 of the Woking Core Strategy (2012), policy DM10 of the Development Management Policies Development Plan Document (2016), policies BE1 and BE3 of the Pyrford Neighbourhood Plan (2017) and the Woking Design Supplementary Planning Document (2015). These seek, amongst other things, to ensure all new development, including development on garden land, is designed to a high quality and respects the street scene and character of the area. It would also conflict with the aim of Section 12 of the National Planning Policy Framework to create high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places.

Thames Basin Heath Special Protection Area

10. The appeal site is within 5kms of the Thames Basin Heath Special Protection Area (TBHSPA). The Council have undertaken an Appropriate Assessment that concludes there would be no adverse impact on the integrity of the TBHSPA subject to a financial contribution towards Strategic Access Management and Monitoring being secured through a S106 Legal Agreement. I am aware that the appellant is willing to enter into an a S106 Legal Agreement with the Council to pay the necessary financial contribution. However, there is no S106 Legal Agreement before me. Nevertheless, given I am dismissing the appeal due to the harm of the proposal on character and appearance, no pathways to significant likely effects on the TBHSPA would arise from my decision.

Other Matters

11. While the Council has not objected to the proposal in terms of its effect on the living conditions of the occupants of neighbouring properties or highway safety, the absence of any objection is a neutral factor in this case.

Conclusion

12. The proposal would conflict with the development plan, read as a whole. It has not been demonstrated that there are any material considerations of sufficient weight to indicate a decision should be taken otherwise than in accordance with it. The appeal is therefore dismissed.

Hannah Guest

INSPECTOR