

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 24 November 2022

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

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 30 December 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/R3650/W/22/3299984

Highlands, Ridgley Road, Chiddingfold, Godalming GU8 4QW

- 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 A Barr against the decision of Waverley Borough Council.
 - The application, Ref. WA/2022/00121, dated 14 December 2021, was refused by notice dated 7 April 2022.
 - The development proposed is the erection of a dwelling with new vehicular access following demolition of the existing annex building.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for the erection of a dwelling with new vehicular access following demolition of the existing annex building at Highlands, Ridgley Road, Chiddingfold, Godalming in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref. WA/2022/00121, dated 14 December 2021 and subject to the conditions in the attached Schedule.

Main Issue

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

Reasons

3. I saw on my visit that Highlands is one half of a semi-detached pair, with the pair of dwellings having a considerable presence in Ridgley Road. This is because of a combination of the Edwardian character, the substantial size of the pair, the building's frontage symmetry and the ample space to the front and side of both dwellings. The annex building currently occupies part of this side space, but because of its relatively low profile this building is not particularly prominent in the street scene. The proposed appeal building would maintain the existing building line and positioned to replace the annex, but would increase its width and be two-storeys as opposed to the existing 1.5 storey height.
 4. The Council's officer report on the application states 'the site lies within the Rural Settlement of Chiddingfold, where moderate levels of development are allowed, subject to impact on the character of the area and residential amenity considerations'. These points notwithstanding, the Council's concern with the appeal application is that the proposed sub-division of the plot would be uncharacteristic of the established development pattern of the area in that it would narrow the frontage of Highlands, close the visual gap between it and
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Greenway to the west, and result in the proposed dwelling having a much shorter plot depth at odds with the existing surrounding character of the area.

5. However, I consider it is inherent in infill residential development that it reduces the size of the donor plot and more often than not results in the additional dwelling having a smaller curtilage than its surroundings. Infill schemes are higher density by definition. The more relevant issue is whether any actual or perceived harm would be caused and if so, whether it would be outweighed by the social and economic benefits of another dwelling – in short ‘the planning balance’.
6. As indicated above, the majority of the proposed dwelling’s width is already taken up with the existing annex. The proposed house would be much higher and with its overall increase in size at first floor and roof levels clearly more noticeable. However, any effect is mitigated because this is not a situation where an existing gap of garden area or the presence of trees that currently make an important contribution to the street scene would be removed and replaced by a new building. The annex is an existing building already there.
7. Furthermore, with a proposed gap to Highlands of just over 4 metres and to Greenway next door of 2.5m, I do not consider that the new dwelling would draw the eye as being inappropriately ‘shoehorned’ in to this section of the road, even allowing for its relatively spacious character. In part this is also because the design is a pastiche of Highlands, albeit at a smaller scale and with the apex of the roof forming an interim stepdown to Greenway, a dwelling of far more modern style.
8. I consider that this choice of design assists in a visual coherence with Highlands that would be pleasing to the eye and significantly reduces the impact of the infill as regards the effect on the street scene. In the event that an entirely different design to both Highlands and Greenway had been proposed, it may well have resulted in a jarring impact that would have weighed in the planning balance against the acceptability of the development. As presented, I consider that the proposed dwelling would make a positive contribution to the street scene.
9. As regards the smaller plot for the proposed dwelling, particularly in terms of depth, the Council is in my view correct to observe that this is uncharacteristic of the established spatial character of the area. However, its shorter depth cannot be observed from the public realm; it is of an adequate size for future occupiers of the proposed dwelling and as I have already observed, reduced plot sizes are an inherent feature of infill development. In these circumstances the curtilage size and shape would not be harmful in this particular context.

Other Matters

10. The Council has acknowledged that there is a shortfall in the 5 year supply target for new housing in the Borough. Whilst the contribution of one additional dwelling to the shortfall is not in itself significant, the fact remains that the cumulative total of the development of individual residential sites where they do not have an unacceptable effect on their surroundings does have an important role in the achievement of the Council’s housing strategy.

11. The Parish Council does not object to the application. However, the officer's report refers to 18 letters from 15 addresses having been received, raising both general objections to the effect of the appeal scheme on the local area and individual comments on what are considered to be the shortcomings and potentially harmful impacts of the application. These include issues with roadside parking; the vehicular access; the cumulative impact on local infrastructure; an increased risk of accidents, and the effect on both Highlands itself and Greenway, the neighbouring property.
12. I have carefully considered all the points made in these representations as well as those also made in supplementary comments submitted for the appeal. However, whilst I attach weight to the points raised, they are insufficient both individually and collectively to alter my overall conclusion on the appeal development.

Conclusion and Conditions

13. Having had regard to the main issue and all other matters, I conclude that the appeal scheme would not have a harmful effect on the character and appearance of the area. Accordingly, there would be no harmful conflict with Policy TD1 of the Waverley Borough Local Plan (Part 1) 2018; Policies RD1, D1 & D4 of the Waverley Borough Local Plan 2002; Policy H2 of the Chiddingfold Neighbourhood Plan 2020, and Section 12: 'Achieving Well-Designed Places' of Government policy in the National Planning Policy Framework 2021.
14. I shall therefore allow the appeal. The Council has suggested some conditions and subject to some minor alterations, including to more closely comply with Government guidance on planning conditions, I consider these to be reasonable and necessary. A condition requiring the development to be carried out in accordance with the approved plans is necessary for the avoidance of doubt and is in the interests of proper planning. I have included a reference to annotations on the plans as these include some important details, one example being the retention of the frontage hedge as shown on the parking and vehicular access plans.
15. A condition requiring the Council's approval of external materials will safeguard visual amenity, as will conditions relating to tree protection. Conditions relating to the vehicular access and on-site parking will maintain highway safety and convenience. A cycle parking condition will encourage the use of this sustainable mode of transport.
16. A condition requiring Electric Vehicle charging points will encourage sustainable transport and assist with moderating climate change, whilst conditions in respect of high quality broadband provision and water supply will ensure sustainable construction and design. Finally, a condition restricting working hours during construction will safeguard the residential amenity of neighbours.

Martin Andrews

INSPECTOR

Schedule of Conditions

- 1) The development to which this permission relates shall begin not later than the expiration of three years beginning with the date of this Decision;
- 2) The development shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans, including the annotations thereon: Drawing No. Series 2118: Plan Nos. HIG.LP01; HIG.LP02; HIG.000; HIG.001; HIG.002; HIG.003 ; HIG.010; HIG.011; HIG.100; HIG.101; HIG.102; HIG.110; HIG.111 Rev. A; HIG.112; HIG.120 Rev. A; HIG.121 Rev. A; Tree Survey Plan: Drawing No. 2020;
- 3) No above-ground works shall take place until details or samples of the materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of the development hereby permitted have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details;
- 4) The proposed vehicular access to Ridgley Road shall be constructed in accordance with the approved plans 2118.120 Rev. A; 2118.121 Rev. A, and thereafter shall be permanently maintained;
- 5) The development hereby approved shall not be first occupied unless and until space has been laid out within the site in accordance with approved plan Ref. No. 2118.HIG.121, for vehicles to be parked and for vehicles to turn so that they may enter and leave the site in forward gear. Thereafter the parking and turning areas shall be retained and maintained for their designated purposes;
- 6) The development hereby approved shall not be first occupied unless and until facilities have been provided in accordance with the approved plan Ref. No. 2118.HIG.121 for the secure parking of bicycles within the development site. Thereafter the parking for bicycles shall be retained and maintained for its designated purpose;
- 7) The development hereby approved shall not be occupied unless and until the proposed parking area is provided with a fast-charge Electric Vehicle ('EV') charging point (current minimum requirements - 7 kw Mode 3 with Type 2 connector - 230v AC 32 Amp single phase dedicated supply) in accordance with details to be submitted and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The EV charging points shall thereafter retained in association with the vehicle parking spaces;
- 8) Prior to commencement of any works on site, demolition or other development activities, a protective fence to BS 5387 located in accordance with Section 6.5 & 6.6 of the Arboricultural Report by Phelps Associates and dated 7 December 2021, shall be erected so as to exclude storage of materials, increases in ground level, excavation or other building activities likely to be harmful to roots. Such fencing shall remain in place throughout the duration of the development. The Local Planning Authority Tree Officer shall be informed of the proposed date of commencement, at least one working week in advance, to allow inspection of protection measures via a site visit or submitted

photographs. Monitoring visits shall be carried out by the Applicant's arboriculturalist in accordance with the inspection stages set out in the Arboricultural Report with copies of photographs sent to the Local Authority Tree Officer;

- 9) The development hereby permitted shall proceed only in accordance with the submitted Tree Protection Plan (Drawing No. 2020) and no additional service utilities shall be installed within the RPAs of retained trees;
- 10) Construction works, including works of site clearance and ground preparation, and including deliveries to and from the site, shall not take place other than between 08.00-18.00 hours Monday-Friday, 08.00-13.00 hours on Saturdays and at no time on Sundays or on Bank or Public holidays;
- 11) Prior to the first occupation of the dwelling hereby permitted, broadband infrastructure equivalent to the highest speed available in this location shall be installed and made available for use;
- 12) Prior to the first occupation of the dwelling, details shall be submitted to and be approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority to confirm that the development has been completed to meet the requirement of 110 litres of water per person per day.