



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 11 January 2023

by M Chalk BSc (Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 01 FEBRUARY 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/C3620/W/22/3301581

Ambulance Station site at Kingston Road, Leatherhead, KT22 7BW

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a failure to give notice within the prescribed period of a decision on an application for planning permission
 - The appeal is made by IndigoScott & SECAMB against Mole Valley District Council.
 - The application Ref MO/2021/2375, is dated 22 December 2021.
 - The development proposed is redevelopment of the existing site to provide 8 no. residential dwellings with associated parking and landscaping.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed, and planning permission is refused.

Preliminary Matters

2. I have taken the description of the proposed development from the appeal form as this specifies the number of proposed dwellings.
3. This appeal results from the failure by the Council to determine the planning application within the prescribed period. The Council have advised that, had they been able to determine the application, they would have refused permission based on the effect on the character and appearance of the area, insufficient provision for on-site parking and the effect on biodiversity.

Main Issues

4. The main issues are therefore:
 - The effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the area,
 - Whether it would make sufficient provision for on-site parking; and,
 - The effect on biodiversity.

Reasons

Character and appearance

5. The appeal site occupies a corner plot at the junction of Kingston Road, which comprises predominantly commercial properties in the near vicinity, and Woodvill Road, a mainly residential street with an access to Leatherhead Trinity School.
6. The appeal proposal would significantly increase the density of development within the site. The houses would be arranged in four 2.5 storey semi-detached

pairs. Their height, the presence of two-storey forward projections to 5 of the houses and presence of front and rear dormer windows would emphasise the overall scale of development. The number of houses, and limited separation between them and to the side boundaries, would result in an overall impression of a cramped form of development on this prominent corner plot. This would be further heightened by the removal of established trees and planting from the site that contribute significantly to its overall appearance within the street scene.

7. Properties to the south of the site along Kingston Road are generally set back from the street. The appeal proposal would in this context appear as an intrusive form of development, poorly related to Kingston Road as the house on Plot 1 would have its side elevation facing onto this street with minimal separation. While the Kingston Road elevation would include several windows, so would address this street to an extent, it would nevertheless be an incongruous feature in the street scene due to its proximity to the boundary, and this would be further heightened by the removal of the established planting to the rear of Plot 1.
8. I recognise that the height of the development is not in itself out of keeping with surrounding properties, including the office buildings on the opposite side of Kingston Road. However, the orientation and overall scale of the houses, lack of space to the boundaries and loss of established planting to the Kingston Road frontage would cumulatively result in a development harmful to the character and appearance of the area.
9. The appeal proposal would therefore conflict with Policy CS14 of the Mole Valley Core Strategy (the CS) and Policies ENV22, ENV23 and ENV24 of the Mole Valley Local Plan (the LP). Taken together these policies require that development be appropriate to the site in terms of its scale, form and appearance, that it not result in a cramped appearance having regard to the general space around buildings in the locality, and that it must respect and enhance the character of the area in which it is proposed whilst making the best possible use of the land available.

Parking

10. Policy ENV22 of the LP requires, amongst other criteria, that development provide adequate parking to adopted standards. Each house would have 4 bedrooms. 1 parking space would be provided for each house on site, in accordance with the maximum parking standards for 4+ bedroom houses set out in Surrey County Council's Parking Guidance Document. Given the site's location close to public transport and the town centre, this would be an acceptable provision in accordance with Policy ENV22 of the LP.

Biodiversity

11. A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal Survey was provided with the application that did not identify any particular concerns regarding biodiversity other than the potential presence of bats on site. This was addressed by detailed bat emergence and re-entry surveys which did not find any evidence of bats roosting in the site.
12. The Council have recommended conditions requiring landscaping and biodiversity enhancement measures be included in any development. If I had

been minded to allow the appeal, I am satisfied that appropriate measures could have been secured in this manner.

13. The appeal proposal would not therefore be harmful to biodiversity. It would accord with Policies CS15 of the CS and ENV15 of the LP. Collectively these seek the protection and enhancement of biodiversity and protected species as part of any development.

Planning Balance

14. The Council cannot demonstrate a 5 year supply of deliverable housing land, with a confirmed supply of just 2.9 years. In addition, the Council has only delivered 70% of the new homes sought within the Housing Delivery Test. Accordingly, the presumption in favour of sustainable development is engaged.
15. The proposed development would deliver 8 new energy-efficient family houses, supporting the Government's objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes. The appeal site is in an accessible location close to services and public transport. There would be economic benefits both from the construction and the occupation of the new dwellings. Considering the housing land supply and delivery shortfalls, these benefits attract considerable weight in the overall balance.
16. The development would also deliver new landscaping for the site. However, given the extent of mature planting that would be lost because of the development, I consider that this is a neutral factor in the overall balance. Similarly, the relocation of the ambulance station to an alternative site is noted and is also considered a neutral factor.
17. There would be harm to the character and appearance of the area from the proposed development. This would arise from the scale and density of the houses, which would be prominently visible in the surrounding area due to their siting, size and proximity to the Kingston Road boundary in particular. The removal of established trees and planting from the site would further increase the prominence of the houses within the street scene. Some of these trees are in poor condition with limited lifespans. However, the combination of the scale of development proposed and removal of existing planting that contributes positively to the appearance of the site would result in a development that would appear cramped within the site and unduly prominent within the street scene. This harm to the character and appearance of the area attracts great weight, which significantly and demonstrably outweighs the benefits associated with the development.
18. There are therefore no material considerations to indicate that this appeal should be determined otherwise than in accordance with the development plan.

Conclusion

19. For the reasons set out above, the appeal fails.

M Chalk

INSPECTOR