



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 10 January 2023

by C Rafferty LLB (Hons), Solicitor

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 07 FEBRUARY 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/A3655/W/22/3291494

31 Sundridge Road, Kingfield, Woking GU22 9AU

- 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 Situl Bakrania against the decision of Woking Borough Council.
 - The application PLAN/2021/0961, dated 24 August 2021, was refused by notice dated 20 October 2021.
 - The development proposed is the subdivision of property to create additional two storey dwelling, erection of a single storey rear extension and external alterations.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The application form described the proposal as a single house conversion with a single storey rear extension to create two family dwellings. I have taken the description from the Council's decision notice which provides more certainty on the nature of the proposal.

Main Issues

3. The main issues are: (i) the effect of the development on the character and appearance of the area; (ii) the effect of the development on the living conditions of future occupiers with regard to the provision of internal floorspace; and (iii) whether the development would result in the loss of a family home.

Reasons

Character and Appearance

4. The site comprises a semi-detached dwelling on Sundridge Road. The immediate area is primarily residential, with properties of varying styles and designs. While not identical, there is a prevailing sense of uniformity to the plot sizes on the street, with dwellings set back from Sundridge Road in generous gardens. This creates a sense of spaciousness and an element of consistency to the pattern and placement of development, to which the site contributes.
5. The proposed dwellings would retain many features of the current property, including the external materials, alignment with surrounding built form, and set back from Sundridge Road. While it would result in hardstanding to the front and the removal of front boundary hedging, this would not appear out of place. Many nearby dwellings have large areas of open hardstanding to the front, with

dropped kerbs located between the grass verges lining the footpath. As such, these elements of the proposal would visually assimilate within the street so as not to cause undue visual harm to the immediate character.

6. However, the proposal would subdivide the site and replace the appeal property with two dwellings. There is dispute between the main parties as to the precise dimensions of the site, but I observed during my visit that its subdivision would nevertheless result in two plots of notably smaller widths and overall dimensions than most others along Sundridge Road.
7. As such, the proposal would fail to preserve the distinctive spaciousness of the area. The siting of the dwellings in notably smaller plots would read as contrived alongside the surrounding properties and associated gardens. While some side space would exist between built form, the proposal would still read as cramped and incongruous in context. It would be notably at odds with the prevailing pattern of development and would detract from the spacious character of Sundridge Road. Overall, it would result in a detrimental impact to the visual appearance of the vicinity and would appear out of place.
8. For the reasons given I find that the proposal would have an adverse effect on the character and appearance of the surrounding area. As such, it would fail to comply with Policies DM10 and DM11 of the Woking Development Management Policies DPD (the DPD) Policies CS21 and CS24 of the Woking Core Strategy (the CS) and the Woking Design SPD insofar as they seek to ensure good design that does not result in harm to the character and appearance of the area.

Living Conditions

9. Policy DM11 of the DPD states that the subdivision of existing properties to two or more dwellings will be permitted subject to, among other things, a good quality of accommodation being provided by meeting any relevant housing standards. Footnote 9 to this policy states that this includes the nationally described space standards (the NDSS). For two bedroom, two storey dwellings the NDSS require a floorspace of 70sqm for three bedspace properties and 79sqm for four bedspace properties.
10. It is stated that the proposed dwellings would each have a floorspace of 54.5sqm. The NDSS are therefore indicative of these dwellings being unduly small. This is further demonstrated by the submitted plans which show an overall limited level of floorspace. This would create confined and cluttered layouts with contrived arrangements of furniture and fixtures, particularly in the bedrooms. As such, the provided floorspace would result in the dwellings being cramped spaces with minimal circulation area. The useability and enjoyment of these spaces by future occupiers would therefore be unduly impacted, such that the dwellings would not represent a good quality of accommodation for day to day living.
11. For the reasons given I find that the proposal would have an adverse effect on the living conditions of future occupiers with regard to the provision of internal floorspace. As such, it would fail to comply with Policy DM11 of the DPD insofar as it seeks to ensure development provides good quality accommodation.

Housing Mix

12. Policy DM11 of the DPD further states that the subdivision of existing properties will be permitted provided it will not result in the overall loss of a family home. The supporting text to both Policy DM11 of the DPD and to Policy CS11 of the CS state that family accommodation is deemed to be units of two or more bedrooms, which can be either houses or flats.
13. The appeal property is a three bedroom dwelling, such that it is considered family accommodation. Its subdivision would therefore result in the permanent loss of a family home, contrary to the aims of Policies CS11 and DM11. While the proposal would replace the appeal property with 2x two bedroom dwellings, I have found that these would provide an unsuitable level of internal floorspace for future residents.
14. Even acknowledging that the number of bedrooms would comply with the definition of family home, the proposed dwellings would not provide a good quality of accommodation and would therefore be unsuitable for housing a family. This is further supported by the Outlook, Amenity, Privacy and Daylight SPD, which defines family accommodation will be taken to mean all houses with two bedrooms or more and exceeding 70 sqm. While this is guidance rather than policy, it remains a material consideration.
15. Accordingly, given the limited level of floorspace to be provided by the scheme, introducing the proposed dwellings at the expense of an existing family dwelling of an appropriate size would not be a benefit of the scheme or result in a net increase in suitable family accommodation.
16. For the reasons given, I find that the proposal would result in the loss of a family home. As such, it would fail to comply with Policies DM11 of the DPD and CS11 of the CS insofar as they seek to ensure an appropriate housing mix.

Other Matters

17. The application site lies within 5km of the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (the SPA). However, there is no need for me to consider the implications upon the SPA in this case as the proposal is unacceptable for other reasons, as referred to above.
18. The appellant refers to the fact that the proposal would not result in adverse impacts on the living conditions of future residents with regards to external amenity space provision, light and outlook. These factors represent a lack of harm, which is neutral in the overall planning balance.

Conclusion

19. For the reasons given, the proposal would not accord with the development plan when taken as a whole. There are no material considerations that indicate the appeal should be determined other than in accordance with the development plan. The appeal should therefore be dismissed.

C Rafferty

INSPECTOR