



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 6 September 2023

by Stewart Glassar BSc (Hons) MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 20 September 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/R3650/D/23/3320489

OLD OAK HOUSE, WONERSH COMMON, WONERSH, GUILDFORD GU5 0PR

- 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 Ms C Bolton against the decision of Waverley Borough Council.
 - The application Ref WA/2022/00484, dated 14 January 2022, was refused by notice dated 23 January 2023.
 - The development proposed is described as 'the formation of a new access from the highway. This is fully explained in the accompanying planning statement'.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. A revised National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) was published by the Government after the determination of the planning application. It does not raise any new considerations in relation to this appeal.

Main Issue

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

Reasons

4. The application relates to one of a group of four dwellings and its curtilage located within the open countryside, and within an Area of Great Landscape Value. Policy RE3 of the Waverley Local Plan 2018 places great weight on protecting Areas of Great Landscape Value both for its own sake and to act as a buffer to the Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.
5. The area surrounding the site is unmistakably rural in character. Aside from this established group of buildings, the immediate area is largely open and free of built development. The existing buildings are set slightly back from the main road and do not have a significant visual exposure from the A281. The alignment of the A281 and the mature boundary planting notably contribute to this situation.
6. The proposed new access would be located to the north of the existing one. It would entail the removal of some boundary hedging/planting along the site boundary. It will also necessitate a new driveway across the garden area of the appellant's dwelling.
7. The removal of a short section of roadside hedgerow and creation of the new vehicular connection to the highway would represent a change in the

- appearance of the land. This would have a slight urbanising effect with a modest level of landscape harm arising to the surrounding area as a result.
8. Whilst I was able to see on my site visit that the existing access is no doubt challenging, particularly for less experienced drivers, there is no substantive evidence before me to demonstrate what, if any, improvements have been considered or could be made to this existing access. For example, the appellant refers to a mirror on the opposite side of the road, as being unreliable. However, this is a flat mirror rather than the more usual convex mirror normally found in such situations. There is nothing before me to show whether or not the unreliability of the mirror could be improved.
 9. Furthermore, the proposal does not prevent the existing entrance from being used and there is no suggestion that the neighbouring residents would be able to avail themselves of the proposed new arrangements. Thus, whilst it might reduce some of the traffic using the existing entrance, it would not stop it entirely. Indeed, it appears that three of the four dwellings would continue to use the existing access.
 10. Overall, the introduction of a new formalised entrance would cause some localised landscape harm but any overall benefits would appear to be limited. Whilst I am sympathetic to the appellant's concerns, there is not sufficient evidence before me which would enable me to find in favour of the scheme and against the protective landscape policy.
 11. Accordingly, I find that the proposal would be contrary to Policy RE3 of the Waverley Local Plan 2018 which, amongst other things seeks to protect landscape character.
 12. The Council's decision also refers to Policy D4 of the Waverley Local Plan 2002. This Plan now appears to have been superseded. The Council has not identified an alternative policy from the newest part of the development plan as being applicable to this appeal. However, this does not alter my findings in relation to Policy RE3 and so does not alter the outcome of this appeal.

Other Matters

13. Although the proposal would meet the appellants' personal circumstances and that of their family, Planning Practice Guidance advises that planning permission usually runs with the land, and it is rarely appropriate to provide otherwise. There may be exceptional occasions where development that would not normally be permitted may be justified on planning grounds because of who would benefit from the permission but there are not sufficient grounds in this case to justify such an approach.
14. No ecological, arboricultural or parking concerns have been raised in relation to the proposal. However, this would be expected for any development to be considered acceptable. As such, these factors would represent a lack of harm which would accordingly be neutral in any balance.
15. The hedge along the A281 is said to be of poor quality and the appellant has indicated a willingness to replant it. However, such planting is not reliant on the development proceeding and could be undertaken regardless of the outcome of this appeal. As such, it does not weigh in favour of the proposal.

Conclusion

16. The proposal would harm the character and appearance of the area and would conflict with the development plan taken as a whole. There are no material considerations that indicate the decision should be made other than in accordance with the development plan. Therefore, for the reasons given, I conclude that the appeal should not succeed.

Stewart Glassar

INSPECTOR