



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 10 July 2024

by A Knight BA PG Dip MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 19th August 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/L3625/W/23/3336125

36 Vernon Walk, Tadworth, Surrey KT20 5QP

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mr A Taylor against the decision of Reigate and Banstead Borough Council.
 - The application Ref is 22/00570/F.
 - The development proposed is the demolition of attached side garage; erection of two 2-storey semi-detached dwellings with roof accommodation; formation of a new vehicular accessway; provision of landscaping and detached garage for donor dwelling.
-

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Application for costs

2. An application for costs was made by Mr A Taylor against Reigate and Banstead Borough Council. This is the subject of a separate decision.

Preliminary Matter

3. The decision notice lists the plans and documents on which the Council has made its decision. This list includes plans originally supplied with the application as well as later amendments. I have based my decision on the most recent version in each case.

Main Issue

4. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the appeal site and surrounding area.

Reasons

Character and appearance

5. The main section of Vernon Walk, a suburban residential street which includes the appeal site, is long and straight, flanked by street trees and grass verges. The semidetached homes that line the street on both sides display distinct uniformity in several respects. Each house is the same distance from the road, on plots of the same width. Bay windows align below shared chimneys towards the centre of each pair. Whilst many houses have been extended or altered in some way, all retain hipped roofs, ensuring substantial and consistent gaps remain between buildings at roof level, and giving a spacious feel. A general 'Arts and Crafts' style is prominent.

6. The main section of Vernon Walk therefore matches the description of '1930s–1950s Suburbia' in the Council's Local Character & Distinctiveness Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (the LCDDG). It is a pleasant, well-kept example of that form of housing, and draws its beneficial character from the uniformity of its dwellings.
7. The far end of Vernon Walk has been developed into a small cul-de-sac. Whilst this is very different in character to the main section of the street, it is set out on a perpendicular section of road beyond a junction and is screened significantly by mature trees. As a result, the cul-de-sac does not impinge to any significant extent upon the inter-war suburban character described above. Other housing developments, including those at Stanton Grove, are far enough away from the appeal site so that they do not form part of the character or appearance of the appeal site and Vernon Walk.
8. The appeal proposal involves creating an access alongside the last semidetached house in the main section of Vernon Walk (the host dwelling) leading to a pair of new semidetached houses on what is currently a rear garden. The host dwelling, though extended, incorporates all of the features found in neighbouring houses, as set out above. Following previous proposals, the principle of accessing and developing the garden has been found acceptable.
9. The appeal dwellings would be partly visible from Vernon Walk through the new access, as well as from the rear of neighbouring houses, and from within the site itself. In addition, they would be the only houses built in what is currently a long stretch of undeveloped garden land. The proposed dwellings would be prominent, therefore, despite being located behind the host property and screened in some directions by mature trees.
10. Though the proposed development would create two plots comparable in width to those found in the main section of Vernon Walk and occupy them with semidetached housing of similar height to neighbouring homes, the proposed dwellings themselves would be significantly narrower than neighbouring houses. This would give them strikingly different proportions to houses in Vernon Walk, resulting in a compressed, congested appearance in comparison. As a result, the proposals would be discordant in the local setting, and harmfully at odds with its character.
11. Though the houses would be set back from the sides of the plot, the gabled roof form would not replicate the open, spacious feel seen to the sides of houses on Vernon Walk, instead creating a more dominant roof form than is usual locally. The placement of bay windows on the outside of the front elevation, and separate chimneys, are design features diametrically opposed to local norms. I recognise that the Council took no direct issue with these features but, to my mind, they are at odds with local characteristics, and would exacerbate the harm caused by the narrowness of the houses, therefore.
12. The proposed parking area to the front of the houses would be far larger than the modest drives in the street, appearing and functioning as a communal car park rather than a private driveway. This would create further discordance with local character, and further exacerbate the harm described above.
13. Overall, the proposed dwellings would appear harmfully and unacceptably at odds with the character and appearance of the appeal site and area. In this

regard it would conflict with Policies CS4 and CS10 of the Reigate and Banstead Core Strategy 2014, and Policies DES1 and DES2 of the Development Management Plan 2019, insofar as they require proposals to reflect local distinctiveness, be in keeping with the existing street scene, and to consider the Character and Local Distinctiveness Design Guide SPD, as well as to the aim of the National Planning Policy Framework to achieve well-designed places.

Other Considerations

14. The proposal before me follows previous refused applications for residential development, Refs 19/00706/F and 21/00378/F, the former leading to a dismissed appeal, ref APP/L3625/W/19/3234025. I appreciate that the appellant considers the appeal scheme to be a response to the outcomes of those applications. Nevertheless, it is a materially different scheme to any of its predecessors and must be judged on its merits overall.
15. I appreciate that permission has been granted for a detached dwelling on the site. The design of that dwelling avoids the congested feel of the appeal proposal, better responds to the hipped roofs common in Vernon Walk, and results in a smaller, private parking area to the front. In these ways the appeal scheme would be harmful in ways the approved scheme would not.

Conclusion

16. The proposal would conflict with the development plan, as a whole and material considerations, including the Framework do not indicate that the appeal should be decided other than in accordance with it. The appeal is dismissed, therefore.

A Knight

INSPECTOR