



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 22 August 2024

by C Hall BSc MPhil MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 10 September 2024

Appeal A Ref: APP/M3645/W/24/3337947

14 Stanstead Road, Caterham CR3 6AA

- 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 David Ciccone Architects Ltd against the decision of Tandridge District Council.
 - The application reference is TA/2023/121.
 - The proposed development is for the erection of 4 semi-detached houses with associated hard and soft landscaping.
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Appeal B Ref: APP/M3645/W/24/3341860

14 Stanstead Road, Caterham CR3 6AA

- 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 David Ciccone Architects Ltd against the decision of Tandridge District Council.
 - The application reference is TA/2023/1306.
 - The proposed development is for the erection of 4 semi-detached houses with associated hard and soft landscaping.
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Decisions

Appeal A

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Appeal B

2. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matter

3. As set out above there are two appeals, both at the same site albeit that the schemes differ in scale, design and layout at the front and rear. I have considered each proposal on its individual merits, but to avoid duplication I have dealt with the two developments together in my reasoning below.

Main Issues

4. The main issues in respect of both appeals are the effect of the development having regard to a) the character and appearance of the site and the surrounding area; and b) the provision of parking in terms of the number and arrangement of spaces, and the impacts on the living conditions of the occupants of neighbouring properties and future residents of the proposed units.

Reasons

Character and appearance

5. The appeal site consists of a detached, two-storey house on Stanstead Road with off-street parking on the driveway to the front. The local neighbourhood is predominantly residential in nature.
6. Walking towards the property from the junction with Church Hill, it is clear that there has been a considerable evolution in the street scene of Stanstead Road in respect of size, scale and layout of built form with associated accesses to properties and parking areas. I observed the close-knit arrangement of dwellings in and around Caterham Court, the substantial block of flats opposite and the extent of hardscaping, albeit softened by mature vegetation. Beyond the site such characteristics are broadly repeated in the environs of Stanstead Close.
7. The street scene plans submitted as part of both appeals A and B demonstrate that there would be a significant increase in built form across the site when viewed from the public highway. However, in the context of the neighbourhood I have described above, I am of the view that the scheme would assimilate with the locale. The size of the buildings, the spacing between elevations and overall design would be commensurate with other examples in the vicinity.
8. Similarly with regard to the depth of the units, the site plans for both appeals A and B indicate that the form would harmonise with other residences in the row, and the staggered relationship between the pairs of semis would take account of the existing pattern and rhythm of development on this side of the road.
9. However, for appeal A I consider that the extensive swathe of hardscaping for pedestrian walkways and the parking and turning of vehicles in the site would be overly conspicuous and oppressive, with limited space available for new planting to provide screening. The sheer amount of paving would dominate the frontage of the scheme, in excess of many other properties locally, and this would be materially harmful to the character of the area.
10. Conversely, by moving the crossover to one side of the site, Appeal B would create a longer stretch of screening along the frontage. This would allow for increased mature vegetation to establish, and such planting would be more sympathetic with the street scene. I find that no adverse impacts would arise as a result.
11. For both appeals, tandem parking is shown to the front of plots 3 and 4. At times of full parking capacity on site, drivers of vehicles situated in bays 6 and 8 (appeal A) and 5 and 7 (appeal B) would have to wait for other cars behind to manoeuvre onto the communal driveway in order to exit to Stanstead Road. This in turn could impede drivers in vehicles in the other spaces within the site. Although I acknowledge that courtesy and slow speeds may limit conflict, to my mind such arrangements would represent a contrived and convoluted situation that is indicative of an over-development of the land. I return to this issue below as it also pertains to parking provision.
12. I therefore conclude on this matter that there would be harm to the character and appearance of the site and the surrounding area as a result of both appeal schemes. This would contravene Policy CSP18 of the Tandridge District Core Strategy 2008 (CS), Policies DP7 and DP8 of the Tandridge District Local Plan

Part 2: Detailed Policies 2014 (LP) and Policies CCW4 and CCW5 of the Caterham, Chaldon and Whyteleafe Neighbourhood Plan 2021 (NP). Collectively, these seek to secure development of acceptable scale and appearance. It would also be inconsistent with the advice in the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework), which states that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development.

Parking provision

13. Appeal B shows 9 parking spaces and the Council has confirmed that this would meet the requirements of the Council's Parking Standards Supplementary Planning Document 2012 (SPD) numerically.
14. Appeal A shows 8 parking spaces. The SPD indicates a minimum parking provision of 3 spaces for dwellings of 4 bedrooms or more, plus one additional legible space. This is not possible on the site and the scheme would therefore be contrary to the SPD.
15. At my site visit on a Thursday morning I noticed there are no parking restrictions on roads within the locality. There was available kerbside space on and in the immediate proximity to the site. Whilst I accept this is only a snap shot in time, it is an indication that on street parking is not difficult to achieve at certain times of day, which is also supported by the findings of the appellant's parking survey. The Council's concerns in this regard certainly do not reflect what I was able to see on my site visit.
16. In the absence of a compelling indication of a local parking issue I do not consider that the proposal would result in a material shortage in parking provision on street in this location. Nor has it been demonstrated that even if there was a material deficiency it would be bound increase congestion or have a harmful effect on living conditions in the immediacy of the site. Consequently, I consider that purely in numerical terms the provision of 8 spaces for appeal A would be acceptable.
17. I note the Council's concerns in respect of the layout of the parking areas and the space available for manoeuvring within the site. For appeal B in particular, there are numerous instances of undersized bays or a shortfall in turning space, such that from a practical point of view the whole forecourt might barely be fit for purpose at times of full parking capacity.
18. Moreover, I reiterate my previous reservations in relation to tandem parking; such an arrangement would also be likely to exacerbate problems in this regard. The tight layout would increase the incidence of excessive manoeuvring on the frontage, which would be detrimental to the living conditions of the occupants of neighbouring properties and future residents of the proposed units through noise and disturbance.
19. Although the number of parking spaces on site would be acceptable for each appeal, I find that the arrangement of the forecourt and bays would be detrimental to the living conditions of the occupants of neighbouring properties and future residents of the proposed units. This would run contrary to Policy DP7 of the LP and Policies CCW4 and CCW5 of the NP in relation to the protection of amenity.

Other considerations

20. I appreciate that the existing dwelling is of no particular design merit, with a poor-quality detached garage structure to the side, and that the site is in an accessible location in close proximity to Caterham town centre. Also, no objections have been raised by the Council with respect to trees, biodiversity, renewable energy provision, surface water flood risk and mitigation, refuse and recycling storage and collection, loss of light, privacy or overbearing effects, and the quality of internal accommodation for future occupants. However, these matters do not counterbalance the harm I have outlined above.

Planning Balance

21. The Framework does not change the statutory status of the development plan as the starting point for decision making. Based upon my previous findings, both appeals are not in accordance with the policies of the development plan due to the harm I have identified in terms of the character and appearance of the area and parking provision. The absence of harm relating to other matters, for example in terms of trees and biodiversity and so on, are a neutral factor.
22. It is not a matter of dispute that there is a shortfall relative to the Council's ability to demonstrate a deliverable five year supply of housing. Consequently, the housing policies which are most important for determining the application are out of date and paragraph 11(d) of the Framework should be applied.
23. Both developments would make a positive contribution to housing supply in an accessible location with associated social and economic benefits, including to the local economy during construction and to local services and facilities upon occupation. However, to my mind, when assessed against the policies of the Framework as a whole, the adverse impacts of granting planning permission in this case in terms of the harm to the character and appearance of the area and parking provision would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits of the developments proposed. Therefore, the presumption in favour of sustainable development does not apply in the particular circumstances of these cases.
24. The conflict with the development plan and the Framework when taken as a whole and the associated harm to the character and appearance of the area and parking provision are significant and overriding factors. Consequently, the material considerations in this case, including the contribution to housing supply and associated benefits previously identified, do not indicate that the application should be determined otherwise than in accordance with the development plan.

Conclusion

25. For the reasons given above and having regard to all other matters advanced, I conclude that both appeals A and Appeal B should be dismissed.

C Hall

INSPECTOR