The Planning Inspectorate

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 4 September 2024 by M Long BA(Hons) MSc MRTPI

Decision by M Russell BA (Hons) DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 08 OCTOBER 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/D3640/D/24/3346638
13 Old Acre, West End, Woking, Surrey GU24 9JT

- 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 & Mrs Wright against the decision of Surrey Heath Borough Council.
- The application Ref is 24/0128/FFU.
- The development proposed is a double storey side and single storey rear extension.

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Appeal Procedure

2. The site visit was undertaken by a representative of the Inspector whose recommendation is set out below and to which the Inspector has had regard before deciding the appeal.

Preliminary Matters

3. Despite a pre-arranged visit which requested access to the site, access to the rear of the appeal site was not possible during my visit. Nevertheless, sufficient understanding of the site and its surrounding context was obtainable from publicly accessible views allowing for the matters most pertinent to the main issues to be assessed.

4. My recommendation is based on the revised elevations drawing (JEA-PRO-004B, Received: 29.02.2024) which was before the Council when it made its decision.

Main Issues

5. The main issues are the effect of the proposal on:

   i) the character and appearance of the area; and,

   ii) the living conditions of neighbouring occupiers at 14 Old Acre (No 14) with particular regard to outlook.

Reasons for the Recommendation

Character and appearance

6. The site is in Old Acre, a cul-de-sac characterised by detached houses of a similar design style. There is strong consistency in terms of their size, hipped roof forms, window styles and proportions, mainly side entrances and common

materials. The West End Village Design Statement Supplementary Planning Document 2013 (WEVDS) identifies that in Old Acre, the arrangement of houses is in pairs, separated by double driveways. This arrangement of houses results in a distinct pattern of spacing between the pairs of dwellings.

7. The tall parapet wall on the side extension would be significantly at odds with the hipped roof profile of its host and neighbouring dwellings. Together with the side extension's prominent front entrance feature and short set back from the front elevation, the proposal would be a discordant addition to the host dwelling and at odds with the predominant characteristics of the street. The scale, width and siting of the side extension would also unacceptably diminish the visual gap between No 14 and would depart from the general arrangement and spacing of houses that characterises Old Acre.

8. While the staggered alignment of houses would obscure some side-on views of the extension, the central position of the site in Old Acre means the proposal, including its parapet side wall, would be very noticeable to those entering the cul-de-sac. In these views, the appeal scheme would detract from the prevailing style, unifying design features and general spacing across the wider group of dwellings. The lowered ridgeline and the use of matching materials and similar window fenestration would not be sufficient to assimilate the overall unsympathetic design of the side extension.

9. I conclude that the proposal would result in harm to the character and appearance of the area. As such, the proposal would conflict with Policy DM9 (Design Principles) of the Surrey Heath Borough Council Core Strategy & Development Management Policies 2011-2028 (2012) (CS&DMP) which seeks development of a high quality design which respects and enhances local character. For the same reasons, it would also conflict with the requirements in the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) to ensure that developments are sympathetic to local character.

10. Furthermore, there would be conflict with Guideline 5 of the WEVDS which sets out that extensions should be complementary to the existing building in proportion and style. The proposed development would also be contrary to the Surrey Heath Borough Council Residential Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document 2017 (RDG) which sets out that side extensions should not erode the character of the street scene and local area.

Living conditions

11. No 14 has a car port to the side which sits over its main entrance. There is also a fence to the shared boundary which sits parallel to the side elevation of No 14. Even so, the space between the top of the fence and the car port, together with the existing gap between the side elevations of the appeal dwelling and the dwelling at No 14, provide for a suitably spacious environment when appreciated from the access drive and entrance to No 14.

12. However, the dominant scale and close proximity of the proposed parapet side wall would unacceptably enclose the side entrance way to No 14. The mass of brickwork would be stark and overbearing, the oppressive effects of which would routinely be experienced by occupiers and visitors to No 14 on accessing or egressing this neighbouring dwelling. This would be contrary to the RDG which sets out that extensions should not result in a material loss of amenity to neighbouring properties as a result of being overbearing.

13. I conclude that the proposal would result in harm to the living conditions of occupiers at No 14 with particular regard to outlook. It would conflict with Policy DM9 (Design Principles) of the CS&DMP which seeks development that respect the amenities of occupiers of neighbouring properties. For the reasons set out, there would also be conflict with the RDG and the proposal would not meet the high standard of amenity requirements at paragraph 135 of the Framework.

Other Matters

14. The proposal would offer improvements to the living accommodation for occupiers of the appeal property. However, this is a private benefit to a single household and does not justify the harm identified to the character and appearance of the area and the living conditions of neighbouring occupiers.

15. Concerns have been raised by the appellant relating to the third-party representations made in respect of the proposal. However, I have considered this appeal scheme on the main issues having regard to the requirements of the development plan. Therefore, comments made by third-parties in respect of other concerns have not in this instance been determinative in my recommendation.

Conclusion and Recommendation

16. The proposal would be contrary to the development plan. For the reasons given above and having had regard to all other matters raised, I recommend that the appeal should be dismissed.

M Long

APPEAL PLANNING OFFICER

Inspector's Decision

17. I have considered all the submitted evidence and my representative's report and on that basis the appeal is dismissed.

M Russell

INSPECTOR