

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 13 August 2024

by R Cahalane BA(Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 25 October 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/N1730/W/24/3345308

11 and 13 Fairmile, Fleet, Hampshire GU52 7UT

- 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 William Dodkin against the decision of Hart District Council.
 - The application Ref is 24/00292/FUL.
 - The development proposed was described as: "Planning for ground first and second floor extensions".
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. I have amended the address of the appeal site, as set out in the banner heading above. The site address in the planning application form is 11 Fairmile. The address in the appellant's appeal form is 13 Fairmile and the appeal statement title includes "13 and 11 Fairmile". The Council has clarified that the application was a joint application by 11 and 13, and I note that the Officer Report clearly assesses this as such.
3. The description of development in the decision notice differs to that contained within the application form and which is also included in the banner heading. The Council has provided evidence that this change in description was agreed upon by the appellant. As this also provides some further detail such as the proposed rear dormer and single storey rear extension, I have determined the appeal on the basis of this amended description.

Main Issues

4. The main issues are:
 - the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the host dwellings and the surrounding area; and,
 - the effect of the proposed development on the living conditions of the occupiers of 5 The Bourne and 8 Rufford Close, with particular regard to privacy and outlook.

Reasons

Character and appearance

5. The appeal site comprises a pair of semi-detached dormer bungalows that front on to Fairmile, a residential road. Fairmile contains mainly semi-detached dwellings with many similar design features, although the appellant has provided evidence to indicate that this estate was built across three phases, with each stage differing to the previous.
6. The surrounding dwellings in the immediate vicinity of the appeal site are within Fairmile Phase 1 and contain semi-detached dwellings of largely similar form and appearance to the appeal dwellings. Views of the side profile of No. 11 were more restricted, on account of the shrubbery within a neighbouring site extending towards and across the road.
7. The appeal proposal includes a significant depth increase across three floors, including a deep crown roof and a flat roof rear dormer that is only marginally lower. During my site visit, I saw no examples of crown roof forms and the resultant side profile of No. 13 would be clearly visible from the road, on account of the open driveways between it and No. 15.
8. The proposed ridge height increase across both dwellings would be of similar height to the nearest semi-detached pair (15 and 17 Fairmile), on account of the higher ground level of these neighbours. However, the increased height relative to the existing front dormers below would further draw the eye to the overall dominating scale and discordant and contrived design of the appeal scheme. The overall increase in bulk and depth, and the extent of flat roof form, would adversely harm the character of the host dwellings and their surrounding setting.
9. The appellant contends that the extension will align with Fairmile's second phase of houses, and argues that differing designs located throughout the road do not comprise a strict architectural uniformity. The second phase contains houses with taller side profiles and some loft extensions including front rooflights and rear dormers. However, their overall heights do not appear discernibly larger than the existing appeal dwellings. The smaller third phase contains detached dwellings that are fully two storey in form and have a different brick type and windows. However, buildings in the second and third phase are not within the immediate vicinity of the appeal site, where there are largely unaltered roof forms that create a more distinctly uniform streetscape.
10. My attention has been drawn to other sites in Fairmile where planning permission has been granted for extensions. The alterations and extensions at No. 10 and No. 19 maintain the appearance of the dormer bungalows and are subservient additions. The extensions to No. 53 include a rear dormer which adds bulk to the roof. However, the design, scale and form of the appeal proposal would add significantly greater bulk to the roof than the extensions to No. 53. This is therefore not directly comparable to the appeal scheme.
11. For the above reasons, the appeal proposal would cause significant harm to the character and appearance of the host dwellings and the surrounding area. It would therefore conflict with Policy NBE9 of the Hart Local Plan (Strategy & Sites) (LPSS) 2032 (Adopted 2020), Policy GEN1(i) of the Hart Local Plan (Replacement) 1996-2006 Saved Policies 2020 (LPRSP), and Policy 10 of the Fleet Neighbourhood Plan (NP) 2018-2032 (Adopted 2019), insofar as they require development to be of high quality design that positively contributes to the overall appearance of the local area, and in keeping and well-integrated

with neighbouring properties in the immediate locality. Conflict also arises with the National Planning Policy Framework (revised 2023), insofar as it seeks to ensure developments are visually attractive and sympathetic to the surrounding built environment.

Living conditions

12. The Council clarifies in the Delegated Report that its concerns relate to overlooking of No. 5 The Bourne and No. 8 Rufford Close. There is some tree planting on the boundaries with these properties but it does not provide a complete screen. The orientation of No. 5 is such that overlooking would be limited to the rear garden. Separation distances are such that the level of overlooking would not be significant in this urban context, and a sufficient level of outlook would also be retained.
13. The rear garden of 8 Rufford Close is relatively shallow in depth, and there would be more direct views from both 11 and 13 Fairmile towards this neighbour's garden area and rear elevation. However, there is an existing degree of overlooking between the dwellings, and sufficient separation would still be provided to avoid an adverse level of overlooking or a dominant, oppressive or overbearing impact on the living conditions of this neighbour, including the day-to-day family living and overall health of its residents.
14. The Officer Report also states that these boundary trees could be removed at any time. Even if this were to happen, I am nonetheless satisfied that the separation distances would still avoid adverse harm to the living conditions of these nearby residents.
15. The appeal proposal would therefore accord with Policy GEN1 of the LPRSP and the Framework, which require, amongst other things, protection of the privacy of adjoining residential uses and a high standard of amenity for existing and future users.

Other Matters

16. The appellant has raised concerns about the way in which the Council has dealt with planning applications at the site. He has raised a complaint with the Council about this. However, these are matters between the appellant and the Council and they have had no bearing on my determination of the appeal.

Conclusion

17. Whilst I have found that the development would not have a harmful effect on the living conditions of the occupiers of 5 The Bourne and 8 Rufford Close, it would cause significant harm to the character and appearance of the site and the surrounding area. This harm is sufficient to justify dismissing the appeal. The proposal conflicts with the development plan and the material considerations do not indicate that the appeal should be decided other than in accordance with it. Therefore, the appeal is dismissed.

R Cahalane

INSPECTOR