



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 20 February 2025

by John D Allan BA(Hons) BTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 06 March 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/A3655/D/24/3358107

12 Fircroft Close, Woking, Surrey, GU22 7LZ

- 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 Georgian-Liviu Catrina against the decision of Woking Borough Council.
 - The application Ref is PLAN/2024/0580.
 - The development proposed is the formation of a new vehicular access and creation of new hardstanding.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for the formation of a new vehicular access and creation of new hardstanding at 12 Fircroft Close, Woking, Surrey, GU22 7LZ in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref PLAN/2024/0580, subject to the following conditions:
 - 1) The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than 3 years from the date of this decision.
 - 2) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the approved plans: Site Location Plan Ref TQRQM24225174728247 dated 12 August 2024 and Site Plan Ref TQRQM24225175736732 dated 12 August 2024.

Procedural Matter

2. The application form used a lengthy description of the proposal. The banner heading above, along with my formal decision, uses the description that was used on the decision notice and repeated by the appellant on the appeal form. This accurately but more succinctly describes the proposal.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the proposal upon the amenities of the area with specific regard to on-street parking.

Reasons

4. The appeal property is a mid-terraced dwelling within a cul-de-sac location and wider residential estate development comprising a mix of two-storey terraced dwellings, three-storey terraced town houses, and four-storey blocks of flats. Local residents' car parking is provided in a manner of ways including integral garages and forecourt parking for some houses, en bloc garage courts, and on-street

parking bays. The proposal would involve the installation of a dropped kerb to facilitate access across the pavement to a single frontage parking space. By so doing, a single on-street parking bay would be lost.

5. The Council has no objection to the principle of a hardstand to the front of No 12. I have no reason to disagree. Of the six properties in the terrace (Nos 11-16 consecutive), only four (including No 12) have garden frontages with any meaningful depth. These are open plan and largely laid to lawn. Nos 15 and 16 have only short front gardens where they immediately face onto a parallel row of four marked on-street parking spaces at the terminal end of the cul-de-sac. I share the Council's view that the introduction of an area of permeable hardstand in favour of some lawn would simply reflect the prevailing character of the immediate area, including the continuous hardstands in front of the townhouses at Nos 17 to 23 (consecutive) immediately opposite.
6. The introduction of an off-street parking space at No 12 would necessitate the removal of one of two tandem on-street parking bays along Fircroft Close at this point (in front of Nos 12 and 13). The local planning authority acknowledges that the County Highway Authority has no objection on highway safety grounds. I have been presented with no evidence for me to take any different view.
7. The Council has argued that the area currently suffers parking stress due to limited opportunities for on-street parking, as evidenced by the Controlled Parking Zone (CPZ) which operates locally. As a consequence, they consider that the loss of one on-street space would exacerbate existing pressure for publicly available on-street parking, which in turn would be detrimental to the amenities of the area.
8. Despite the Council's assertions, I have been provided with no evidence, either substantive or anecdotal, to suggest that the area suffers significantly from any parking stress. The CPZ only seeks to control parking for a two-hour period between 9.30 and 11.30 during weekday mornings, limiting the waiting time to one hour and charging for use during that period with parking vouchers available to buy from local shops. I agree with the appellant's argument that the CPZ appears intended to deter commuter parking, given the area's proximity to Woking Town Centre, rather than to make specific provision for residents due to excessive demand.
9. At the time of my visit in the middle part of the day, when parking is unrestricted, I saw ample capacity within the marked bays. I also observed space on many private forecourts, where they existed. Whilst just a snapshot in time, it implies that many cars returning to their home destinations during the evenings and weekends would be able to use legitimate parking spaces where available. Furthermore, my own observations match survey data provided by the appellant, which is unchallenged by the Council. These show that on two particular weekday mornings in December 2024 during operation of the CPZ, on average between four and six on-street parking spaces were available. Further surveys undertaken late afternoon on a Friday, mid-afternoon on a Saturday, and mid-evening on a Sunday showed on average between five and seven on-street parking spaces available. Without any compelling evidence to the contrary, I have no reason to reject the appellant's position. I therefore do not share the Council's unsubstantiated view that the area is heavily parked with limited opportunities for on-street parking.

10. When all of this is considered, and also taking into account that only one on-street parking space would be forfeited, with a balancing off-street space provided in return, albeit for private use, I am unable to identify how the proposal would lead to any harm to the amenities of the area. By providing a parking space for an existing dwelling, I can find no conflict with the Council's *Parking Standards Supplementary Planning Document*, adopted in 2018, or with the aims and objectives of Policy CS18 of the Woking Core Strategy 2012, which deals with transport and accessibility.

Conditions

11. The Council has suggested six conditions in the event of the appeal succeeding. I have considered these against the tests that are set out in the Planning Practice Guidance and advice within the National Planning Policy Framework.
12. In addition to the standard time limit condition, a condition specifying the relevant plans is necessary as this provides certainty.
13. The approved plans show the hard surface to be constructed with permeable paving. No further control of materials is necessary. Neither is it necessary for a condition to require a parking space to be laid out for one vehicle as this is at the heart of the proposal and shown on the approved plans.
14. A requirement for visibility splays for a vehicle emerging from the hardstand would involve land outside of the appellant's control, namely across the frontage of No 13, and could not therefore be secured by condition. Nevertheless, due to the open plan frontages to this very small terraced group, a vehicle parked and emerging from the site would be openly visible to those using the public highway, with such a manoeuvre not uncommon given the parking arrangements for the town houses opposite. When also considering the short limb of cul-de-sac involved, with no through traffic and little other movement except from those living in the few properties beyond the appeal site and the occasional visitors, I am satisfied that use of the site for parking with the layout shown on the approved plans would not have any significant impact upon highway safety or cause any inconvenience to other highway users.
15. The planning permission hereby granted does not terminate the on-street parking bay. However, its removal would be subject to other regulatory requirements not directly controlled by the local planning authority. Furthermore, a condition requiring these works is not needed to make the development acceptable in planning terms.
16. The County Highway Authority has suggested a condition requiring the installation of an EV charging point prior to occupation of the development. Whilst I note this is the appellant's intention, I find no specific development plan policy support for this to be a requirement. I note also that this condition was not suggested by the local planning authority.

Conclusion

17. For the reasons given above, the appeal is allowed.

John D Allan

INSPECTOR