



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 11 March 2025

by R Cahalane BA(Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 03 July 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/R3650/W/24/3344623

37 Hewitts Road, Cranleigh, Surrey GU6 8US

- 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 Alex Wheelhouse against the decision of Waverley Borough Council.
 - The application Ref is WA/2024/00225.
 - The development proposed is change of use of land from residential (Use Class C3) to mixed use residential and dog grooming (Sui Generis) and erection of an outbuilding for use as a dog grooming business following demolition of existing shed.
-

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. In the banner heading above, I have utilised the description of development from the decision notice rather than the application form description. Whilst including useful information regarding the proposal, the application form description is of greater detail than is necessary to describe the proposal. I have determined the appeal accordingly.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development on the living conditions of nearby residents, with particular regard to noise and disturbance.

Reasons

4. The appeal site (No 37) is a semi-detached dwelling, with an enclosed rear garden with side gate access facing Hewitts Road. Two side-by-side private parking spaces allocated for No 37 are located near to this gate access. Dwellings in the vicinity have varying sizes and layouts, including varying garden areas.
5. The proposed outbuilding would be located adjacent the side boundary of the end-terraced dwelling of No 39 Hewitts Road. As this neighbouring dwelling is set behind No 37, the outbuilding would align with its front elevation, and would sit alongside its side elevation. The side boundary turns away from No 39's front elevation towards the rear elevation of No 37. Customer access would be along the existing rear garden hard surfaced path, which is adjacent this diagonal section of boundary that faces the cul-de-sac parking area.
6. As the rear garden of No 37 is relatively narrow, the outbuilding would also be sited near to the other side boundary with the rear garden of the adjoining dwelling No 35 Hewitts Road. It would also be sited near to No 35's rear elevation. The rear

boundary of No 37 adjoins the rear garden boundary of the detached Vine House. This neighbour's rear elevation faces the proposal at some distance away from it.

7. As a small dog grooming business, the proposal would operate from the outbuilding four days per week, from 9am to 5pm Mondays to Fridays and 9am to 3pm on Saturdays, depending on customer need. A maximum of four full dog grooms would be undertaken, or six smaller sessions, although the appellant anticipates that more full grooms would take place than smaller sessions. The premises would be operated by one employee, with one dog at a time to be groomed, and a maximum of two dogs at any time during handover from one client to another.
8. Whilst my visit was a snapshot in time, ambient noise levels were low, with some road noise audible. I therefore anticipate that impulsive and potentially loud noises arising from the appeal proposal, such as dogs barking, would be less easy to ignore or tolerate by neighbouring occupiers.
9. Noise characteristics of a residential area often include dogs barking. I also accept that parking for customers will be provided in close proximity to the gate and proposed outbuilding, to minimise travel time from their cars. However, despite best endeavours, dogs taken in for grooming would in some cases be stressed, agitated or otherwise energised. This would inevitably lead to unpredictable barking and noise generation, including outside of the proposed outbuilding.
10. Additionally, back-to-back booking slots could lead to different owned dogs unexpectedly encountering each other during changeover periods. Moreover, any dogs to be kept as pets within nearby dwellings could also disturb or be disturbed by the dogs to be groomed, which would also create further unwanted noise.
11. There is no industry published assessment document or criteria specifically for noise from barking dogs. This may reflect the fact that such noise is impulsive and unpredictable. To my mind, the location near to the immediate neighbouring boundaries and elevations of Nos 35 and 39 would likely expose their occupiers to noise characteristics of a greater intensity than what would reasonably be expected within a residential cul-de-sac setting.
12. Although the proposed operating hours are limited to avoid early morning and evening periods, and may be shorter than many full-time business operations, harm to living conditions can still nonetheless occur. The lack of neighbouring objections received does not equate to a lack of harm to current and future residential occupiers. In light of all the above, I am not persuaded that the imposition of a planning condition requiring the submission of a noise impact assessment undertaken by a suitably qualified professional would avoid significantly harmful impacts on neighbouring living conditions.
13. Noise would also emanate from use of an air conditioning unit and dog grooming equipment within the proposed outbuilding. A number of acoustic measures relating to the outbuilding structure are proposed, including insulation and double glazing. Appropriate implementation and testing of these measures could in principle be secured by means of a suitably worded planning condition. Whilst this might be sufficient to account for dog grooming and ventilation equipment, the submitted evidence does not demonstrate that these measures would mitigate harm to neighbouring living conditions arising from the more impulsive and unpredictable noise characteristics of dog barking.

14. My attention has been drawn to several planning permissions for dog grooming businesses granted in recent years by the Council elsewhere in the District, including at No 1 Hewitts Road towards the estate entrance. No 1 is however a detached dwelling with a materially different relationship to surrounding neighbours than No 37.
15. The full details and policy contexts of the other listed examples in Cranleigh, Hindhead and Farnham are not before me, which in any event would have turned on their own site-specific circumstances. I also observed some evidence suggesting a dog grooming business on the opposite side of the Hewitts Road estate entrance. It is not however clear whether any such change of use benefits from planning permission. None of the abovementioned examples therefore justify allowing this appeal.
16. For the above reasons, I conclude that the anticipated noise and disturbance arising from the appeal proposal would have a significantly harmful impact on the living conditions of nearby residents, namely Nos 35 and 39 Hewitts Road. The proposed mitigation measures would not sufficiently reduce this adverse impact. Policy DM1 of the Waverley Borough Local Plan Part 2: Site Allocations and Development Management Policies (LPP2) 2023 sets out, amongst other things, that if significant environmental impacts from development cannot be avoided or adequately mitigated, planning permission should normally be refused.
17. The appeal proposal is therefore contrary to Policies DM1 and DM5 of the LPP2. Collectively, these policies require, amongst other things, development to avoid significant harm to the health or amenity of occupants of nearby land and buildings, including by way of an unacceptable increase in noise.
18. The officer report raises concern regarding light pollution from vehicles travelling to and from No 37. Given the presence of other parking spaces along the cul-de-sac and that the proposed operating hours would not extend beyond 5pm, I do not envisage any material impact on neighbouring living conditions in this regard.

Other Matters

19. The appellant is aggrieved by the Council's conduct during the application process. Any issues regarding levels of communication and inconsistencies of approach are however matters between the appellant and the Council, and have had no bearing on my determination of this appeal.

Planning Balance

20. Policy EE1 of the Waverley Borough Local Plan Part 1: Strategic Policies and Sites (LPP1) 2018 supports the provision of development for economic growth to meet the needs of the economy, including within defined settlements such as Cranleigh. This is however subject to compliance with the criteria set out in the LPP2. In this respect, I have found that there would be significant harm to neighbouring living conditions, contrary to Policies DM1 and DM5 of the LPP2. I therefore conclude that the appeal scheme is contrary to the development plan as a whole.
21. The proposal would facilitate a small business operation, and the LPP1 indicates that the vast majority of the businesses within Waverley are micro businesses employing fewer than ten people. The dog grooming business would cater for

growing demand in the Cranleigh and Dunsfold locality, including from increased new build developments. I afford moderate weight in favour of this benefit.

22. Planning decisions often involve competing interests that must be weighed in the balance by the decision maker. In the specific circumstances of this appeal, the significant harm I have identified to the living conditions of nearby residents outweighs the above benefits of the proposal.

Conclusion

23. For the reasons given above, the proposal conflicts with the development plan as a whole and the material considerations before me do not indicate that a decision should be made otherwise than in accordance with the development plan. The appeal is therefore dismissed.

R Cahalane

INSPECTOR