

23 FEBRUARY 2021 PLANNING COMMITTEE

6c PLAN/2020/1037

WARD: Heathlands

LOCATION: Fairfield, Sun Hill, Hook Heath, Woking, Surrey, GU22 0QL

PROPOSAL: Erection of first floor extension to existing bungalow to form two storey dwelling, and associated remodelling to dwelling and existing detached garage.

APPLICANT: Elizabeth Slater

OFFICER: James Kidger

REASON FOR REFERRAL TO COMMITTEE

The application is brought before the Committee at the request of Councillor Ashall.

PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

Planning permission is sought to remove the pitched roofs to the dwelling and garage, add an additional storey to the dwelling, and to remodel both in a contemporary style.

PLANNING STATUS

- Conservation Area
- Escarpment
- Hook Heath Neighbourhood Area
- Green Belt
- Tree Preservation Order

RECOMMENDATION

Grant planning permission subject to conditions.

SITE DESCRIPTION

The property is a single storey detached dwelling at the south end of Sun Hill. The land is part of an escarpment and slopes steeply up to the north, away from the site toward Hook Heath Road. The dwelling itself is partially set into the base of the hill and the remainder of the curtilage is on a plateau. The site lies wholly within the Green Belt, is covered by a tree preservation order (TPO), and is part of the Fishers Hill Conservation Area. A number of nearby dwellings are locally listed.

PLANNING HISTORY

- 77/718 – detached bungalow and garage – approved August 1977.
- PLAN/1987/0846 – hipped roof to garage – approved 8th October 1987.
- PLAN/2011/0723 – loft conversion – approved 4th October 2011.

CONSULTATIONS

- Arboriculture – No objection subject to compliance with submitted arboricultural report.

23 FEBRUARY 2021 PLANNING COMMITTEE

- Heritage Consultant – No objection (quoted in detail below).
- Hook Heath Neighbourhood Forum – Objection as the application does not comply with the Hook Heath Neighbourhood Plan.

REPRESENTATIONS

Four (4) representations have been received objecting to the proposed development, for the following reasons:

- The development would detract from views of the escarpment;
- The development would be out of keeping with the Conservation Area;
- The development would be out of keeping with the Arcadian character of the Conservation Area and Hook Heath as a whole;
- The design, form and materials used would not be in harmony with the neighbouring locally listed buildings;
- The development would result in a materially larger building which may be inappropriate within the Green Belt;
- The extension would be disproportionate and no very special circumstances have been advanced;
- The development would neither preserve nor enhance the Conservation Area;
- The development would detract from the character of the area;
- The additional storey would overlook Hook Hill Cottage;
- Breach of covenant; and
- Difficulty of construction traffic accessing the site.

Officer note: covenants and construction matters are not material planning considerations.

RELEVANT PLANNING POLICY

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2019):

Section 2 – Achieving sustainable development

Section 9 – Promoting sustainable transport

Section 12 – Achieving well-designed places

Section 13 – Protecting Green Belt land

Section 15 – Conserving and enhancing the natural environment

Section 16 – Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

Development Management Policies DPD (2016):

DM2 – Trees and landscaping

DM13 – Buildings in and adjacent to the Green Belt

DM20 – Heritage Assets and their Settings

Woking Core Strategy (2012):

CS6 – Green Belt

CS18 – Transport and accessibility

CS20 – Heritage and conservation

CS21 – Design

CS24 – Woking's landscape and townscape

CS25 – Presumption in favour of sustainable development

Hook Heath Neighbourhood Plan (2015):

BE1 – Design of New Developments

23 FEBRUARY 2021 PLANNING COMMITTEE

BE2 – Off-road Parking
OS1 – Amenity Value

Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs):

Parking Standards (2018)
Woking Design (2015)
Climate Change (2013)
Outlook, Amenity, Privacy and Daylight (2008)

Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPGs):

Heritage of Woking (2000)

PLANNING ISSUES

1. The main planning considerations material to this application are the impact on the Green Belt, the design and appearance of the proposed development and its impact on heritage assets and the escarpment, and the impact on the amenity of neighbouring properties.

Green Belt

2. The proposed development would result in an approximate 29% increase in volume over that of the original dwelling. This is within the 20-40% guideline set out in policy DM13. The extension is also considered proportionate in practical terms given the limited increase in height set out above. There would be no conflict with paragraph 145 of the NPPF, and no unduly detrimental impact to the openness of the Green Belt.

Character and heritage assets

3. The Fishers Hill Conservation Area was designated in 1992. It comprises a relatively narrow strip of land mostly situated on the south side of Hook Heath Road. It was mainly developed between 1895 and 1914 with large country houses designed by prominent architects, including Lutyens. The existing bungalow, however, is a post-war infill development of no architectural merit.
4. The existing structure does not contribute positively toward the Conservation Area. However, the design aesthetic of the proposed development would differ considerably. The Council's heritage consultant has commented as follows:

"The current bungalow is set in a large plot in a form of back-land position which is not prominent in the conservation area. I consider the very contemporary approach to design to be acceptable, The NPPF advises that design principles "should not stifle innovation", I consider this simple crisp design to not harm the appearance of this mixed character conservation area. Due to the flat roof the height only marginally increases the volume of the new building. I have no adverse comments."

5. Policy BE1 of the Hook Heath Neighbourhood Plan calls for development which "closely reflect[s] the existing rhythm, proportion, materials, height, scale, bulk, massing and storey heights of nearby buildings." In this case however the property is not part of a contiguous street scene; rather, as described above, it is well contained within its large plot and has no close spatial relationship with any of the nearby dwellings.

23 FEBRUARY 2021 PLANNING COMMITTEE

6. Each of the four nearby dwellings are very different in terms of design. There is no real common aesthetic across the Conservation Area, except perhaps the use of pitched roofs (in a variety of forms). In this context it is worth noting that the existing dwelling is the least harmonious of all, and – hipped roof aside – bears almost no resemblance to the others. Its replacement would exchange one unique dwelling for another, which, within the confines of the large well landscaped plot would largely define its own character.
7. Policies CS20 and DM20 of the Core Strategy and Development Management Policies respectively largely echo Section 16 of the NPPF in calling for new development to “respect and enhance the character and appearance of the area” (CS20) and “preserve and/or enhance the heritage asset and/or its setting” (DM20). In this case and as described above, the proposal would exchange one unique dwelling for another. The resulting structure, as an example of a more modern design approach, is considered to have greater architectural interest than the existing and would thus make a more positive contribution to the Conservation Area.
8. Neighbouring properties ‘South Hill’ and ‘Hook Hill Cottage’ are locally listed. The proposed development is not considered harmful to the setting of these buildings for the reasons set out above. Further, as the site is on lower ground and is well screened from the north the practical impact would be limited.
9. It is considered that the proposed development would preserve the character and appearance of the heritage assets in line with local and national policy.

Escarpment

10. Policy OS1 of the Hook Heath Neighbourhood Plan states that development should “not significantly detract” from “Views from south of Hook Heath Road up the escarpment”.
11. Due to the flat roof the proposed additional storey would only be around 1.2m higher than the existing roofline. The impact to longer views of the escarpment would be minor given that the dwelling is partially set into the base of the hill, and is not considered to be significantly harmful.

Neighbouring amenity

12. The proposed development would involve no increase in the footprint of the existing buildings, which are set well away from the neighbouring properties. No harmful overbearing impact would be facilitated.
13. The dwelling is sited on ground lower than that of the neighbouring properties and the site is well screened with trees and hedgerows. The proposed first floor windows would not therefore facilitate any significantly harmful overlooking of neighbouring plots.

Trees

14. Trees on the site are protected by virtue of its conservation area status and also by an area TPO made in 1987. An arboricultural report has been submitted and is considered acceptable by the Council’s arborist. The content of the report will be secured by condition in order to prevent harm to protected trees.

23 FEBRUARY 2021 PLANNING COMMITTEE

Local Finance Considerations

15. The proposed new build residential floor space would not exceed 100m² and thus would not be liable for a financial contribution under the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL).

CONCLUSION

The proposed development is not considered harmful to the character of the area and would preserve the heritage assets and their settings. There would be no significant impact on views of the escarpment or to neighbouring amenity. It is considered proportionate to the original dwelling and would not adversely impact the openness of the Green Belt. The application is therefore recommended for approval subject to conditions.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Site Photographs dated 18th December 2020.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that planning permission be GRANTED subject to the following conditions:

1. The development for which permission is hereby granted shall be commenced not later than the expiration of three years beginning with the date of this permission.

Reason: To accord with the provisions of Section 91(1) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended by Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004).

2. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the approved plans listed below:

2010-FFSH-004 Rev A – Proposed Elevations – received 17th November 2020
2010-FFSH-005 Rev A – Proposed Elevations – received 17th November 2020
2010-FFSH-008 Rev A – Proposed Ground Floor Plan – received 17th November 2020

2010-FFSH-009 Rev A – Proposed First Floor Plan – received 17th November 2020

2010-FFSH-010 Rev A – Proposed Roof Plan – received 17th November 2020

2010-FFSH-011 Rev A – Proposed Sections – received 17th November 2020

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and to ensure that the development is completed in accordance with the approved plans.

3. No above ground development, aside from the removal of the existing roofs, shall commence until details and samples of the materials to be used in the external elevations have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall be carried out and thereafter retained in accordance with the approved details unless otherwise agreed in writing by the local planning authority.

Reason: To protect the character and appearance of the site and the visual amenities of the area.

23 FEBRUARY 2021 PLANNING COMMITTEE

4. Protective measures shall be carried out in strict accordance with the arboricultural report provided by Bucks Plant Care Ltd and received on 18th November 2020, including the convening of a pre-commencement meeting and arboricultural supervision as indicated. No works or demolition shall take place until the tree protection measures have been implemented. Any deviation from the works prescribed or methods agreed will require prior written approval from the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To ensure reasonable measures are taken to safeguard trees in the interest of local amenity and the enhancement of the development itself.

Informatives:

1. The Council confirms that in assessing this planning application it has worked with the applicant in a positive and proactive way, in line with the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework 2019.
2. The applicant is advised that Council Officers may undertake inspections without prior warning to check compliance with approved plans and to establish that all planning conditions are being complied with in full. Inspections may be undertaken both during and after construction.
3. The applicant is advised that under the Control of Pollution Act 1974, works which will be audible at the site boundary will be restricted to the following hours: 8.00 a.m. - 6.00 p.m. Monday to Friday; 8.00 a.m. - 1.00 p.m. Saturday; and not at all on Sundays and Bank Holidays.