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15 Avenue South, Surbiton, KT5 8PJ

Planning Statement in support of application for demolition of existing garage and erection of a two storey house (ground and partial lower ground floor), with alterations to existing property to improve access and garden areas

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Introduction

1. This Statement accompanies a planning application for the demolition of an existing detached garage and erection of a single dwelling. The application follows a pre-application enquiry in 2022. This formal application has responded to the comments made following this submission, with amended plans and additional information being submitted.
2. The application comprises the following drawings and documents:
 - 01: location and block plan
 - 02: site survey
 - 03: existing elevations
 - 04a: proposed site plan
 - 05: proposed plans
 - 06: south elevation
 - 07: east elevation
 - 08: north elevation
 - 09: sections A, B & C
 - 10: section D
 - 11: views
 - 12: existing floorplans
 - Planning Statement (Leigh & Glennie Ltd)
 - Design Statement (Imago Architects)
 - Arboricultural Assessment and Outline Method Statement (Nicholas Jones Consultants Ltd)
 - Lighting Assessment (NRG Consulting)
 - Fire Statement (UK Fire Safety Management Ltd)
3. The garage is a redundant building that stands to the side of No. 15 Avenue South, which is a large property divided into four flats. Access to the site is from Avenue South, with car parking on that frontage. The flats within No. 15 are then accessed via a narrow entrance path on the eastern side of the building, with external stairs that appear to date from the mid 20th Century.



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4. The wider area is a mix of detached and semi-detached houses and bungalows, whilst directly adjoining to the north are new flats, recently constructed, which face The Avenue. There is no consistent character to the residential area, which is free from any particular policy designation. Photographs are attached to this Statement.
5. The site was the subject of a planning application in 2016 for a new dwelling that was refused on the grounds of inadequate internal living space, possible impact on light to neighbouring properties, harm to the character of the area, and an absence of information relating to construction (ref. 16/16676/FUL). This application addresses these matters, along with the issues raised in the pre-application submission.
6. An important change from that 2016 scheme is that the works now propose to relocate the entrance arrangements for the flats within No. 15. The existing arrangement had been shown to be retained in the 2016 scheme, which led to a rather narrow site. The new scheme sees the relocation of the pedestrian access, which is now possible due to the redevelopment of the land to the north enabling a wider strip of land around the building and as the applicant now has control over the existing flats so can enact such changes. As will be explained, this enables both the new house to be wider than shown before, and it also results in an improvement to the residents of the existing flats in No. 15.
7. This Planning Statement examines the current proposals in light of national and local policies, and appraises the scheme in relation to the advice given at the pre-application stage.

Principle of development

8. The site is within a residential area and is an unused garage building, too small for any functional use. The proposal to provide an additional dwelling within an urban area represents use a sustainable pattern of development and is consistent with Policies GG2, D3, H1 and H3 of the London Plan and Policy CS10 of the Kingston Core Strategy.
9. The NPPF sets out at paragraph 60 *'the Government's objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes' and that 'it is important that a sufficient amount and variety of land can come forward where it is needed, that the needs of groups with specific housing requirements are addressed and that land with permission is developed without unnecessary delay'*.
10. The previous planning application concluded that *'the principle of creating additional residential units is acceptable'* and hence the same conclusions can be drawn. The pre-application submission raised no objection to the principle of the scheme.
11. The Council cannot currently demonstrate a five year housing land supply. Hence there is a presumption in favour of sustainable development and the 'tilted balance' applies: any adverse impacts must significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits of the scheme, namely the provision of additional housing and the improvement to the appearance of the area (as shall be demonstrated below).

Quality of housing

12. The submission includes the relocation of the existing accesses to No. 15. This enables a larger plot for the new house, which addresses the 2016 objection, and further ensures the new house satisfies the internal floor areas set out in Policy D6 of the London Plan and Policy DM13 of the Core Strategy, and the Residential Design Guide. The layout of the property is well thought-out, to provide usable space, and there is good provision of natural light for future occupants: windows are provided to all bedrooms and living rooms.
13. Amenity space is provided for the new residents with space at the front of the property, along with an internal courtyard. The Core Strategy and Residential Design SPD requires, for this 4 person dwelling, 14 sq m of space. A front garden area of 21 sq m is provided, set over a front garden and lowered garden. This is a private, usable area, being screened from adjoining buildings, the parking area and the street, accessible only from the house itself; it most certainly is useable, and more so when compared to the amenity space at the existing flats within No. 15. There is also a small inner courtyard to the building. The size and position of amenity space for the proposed house is therefore comparable to that seen in the area with No. 15 and the flats to the north.
14. As noted earlier, the new access for the existing flats would improve the quality of living accommodation for existing residents. The application also proposes a reconfiguration of existing landscaped areas on the site to enhance the amenity space for those existing occupants, as well as a new pedestrian access to The Avenue.

Design and character

15. The proposed dwelling continues the existing building line along Avenue South. The increased width of the site compared to the 2016 refusal allows for a house that is of better proportion than shown before: it is wider, and hence can also be slightly taller.
16. The design of the proposed dwelling has changed from that shown at the pre-application stage in response to comments from the Council. The height has been reduced, through the removal of a proposed second floor. There would be a contemporary appearance to the building, which gives the distinction from the existing building and so allows the new property to be read as a clear addition to the house; due to considerations of access and lighting requirements, it would not be possible to have a simple extension to No. 17, and the use of deliberately different materials avoids the difficulty that frequently arises in trying to extend long-established buildings.
17. As noted earlier, the wider area is of diverse character, with modern flats in different material to the north, and a variety of housing to the south. This was recognised in the pre-application response. The proposals would lead to an improvement in the character of the area through the removal of the existing unsightly garage and the external steps to No. 15. These post-War additions are of poor appearance, form and condition. Their removal would be a positive effect on the street. The NPPF seeks to achieve well-designed and beautiful places, with high quality and beautiful buildings (paragraph 131).
18. There would not be any impact on trees, and the previous application led to no objection on this matter. A tree report accompanies this planning application.
19. The proposals have therefore responded to comments made at the pre-application stage by reducing the amount of development and changing the design approach. This means the scheme is now a suitable change to the area, consistent with the guidance in Policies D1, D3 and D4 of the London Plan, and Policies CS8, DM10, DM11 and DM12 of the Core Strategy, and the SPD.

Effect on amenity

20. The position of windows in the new dwelling would not lead to any impact on privacy or overlooking for existing residents, and there would not be any overlooking of future occupants. There would not be any views from within the enclosed courtyard towards adjoining buildings.
21. The siting of the proposed building and height would not be imposing to the outlook from the new flats to the rear.
22. Consideration has been paid to the outlook from windows in the adjoining building of No. 17. The design and scale of the new house has been modified from the pre-application submission. The enclosed lighting assessment shows no material effect on levels of light to the flats in that building. Thus, Policy DM10 of the Core Strategy is satisfied.

Access and parking

23. There are 4 parking spaces at present for the existing 4 flats. These would be kept in the proposals, with sufficient manoeuvring space alongside. There is space for one new parking space for the proposed dwelling. This arrangement was found acceptable in the previous submission. Cycle parking for existing and future occupants will be provided, as was the case in the previous scheme.
24. The proposed works to the existing property involve the creation of a secondary pedestrian access to The Avenue. This will improve the accessibility of those flats.

Servicing and detailed provisions

25. Servicing and bin storage for the proposed dwelling is shown on the drawings, along with location of services for the retained flats.
26. Conditions can be attached to the grant of permission relating to water usage, drainage and energy use. An electric vehicle charging point would be provided, which can be secured by condition. A condition can secure the provision of bird and bat boxes in the scheme.

Summary

27. The principle of an additional house on this was accepted in 2016, but that scheme suffered due to the limited size of the plot. This has now been addressed and the wider plot allows for a house that fits within the character of the area. This also ensures that the previous issues of the quality of the internal accommodation and the appearance of the house have been addressed.
28. This formal submission also responds to comments made following the pre-application submission. The scale of the proposed building has been reduced and the design changed to show a contemporary building, which is a suitable addition to the varied character of the area. There would be useable space for future occupants, and the quality of the accommodation for the occupants of the existing flats would be improved.
29. The Council cannot demonstrate sufficient housing supply and so there is a presumption in favour of the proposed development. The proposals represent the provision of housing in a sustainable location, and hence permission can now be granted.

Photographs of the site and wider area



The garage site, seen from Avenue South and from within the site



Recently built at The Avenue, adjoining the site to the north



Access to the existing flats within No. 15 Avenue South, which will be removed and relocated as part of scheme