
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 18 October 2016

by Patrick Whelan BA(Hons) Dip Arch MA MSc ARB RIBA RTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government

Decision date: 7 November 2016

Appeal Ref: APP/H1705/W/16/3154255
118 Bishopswood Road, Tadley RG26 4HG

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mr A Parsons against the decision of Basingstoke & Deane Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 16/00507/FUL, dated 10 February 2016, was refused by notice dated 26 May 2016.
 - The development proposed is a new dwelling.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matter

2. Since it issued its decision, the Council has adopted the Basingstoke and Deane Local Plan 2011-2029, which replaces the policies referred to in the Council's decision. Both parties have provided representations regarding the decision in the light of the policies of the new Local Plan, and I have taken these into account in reaching my decision.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

4. The site of the proposed house is part of the back garden of one part of a pair of semi-detached houses, in a modern estate characterised by its spacious street and plot layout as well as its unenclosed front gardens and its green character of extensive verges, green swards, and mature tree planting. The Council is concerned with the spatial impact of the development, and also fear that it would result in the loss of trees in the highway.
 5. The block layout of the estate has been carefully arranged to retain full length back gardens to houses including those on block corners, such as the appeal site. This makes the private gardens behind the houses appear deep and spacious, which balances the extensive areas of greenery and public space in the streets. Part of the area for the proposed development is presently a large, open area of grass, which contributes to the green setting between the footways and the roads. The development of a separate dwelling in this important gap between dwellings would reduce the green character
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experienced from the public realm and would undermine the spacious character of the estate.

6. The drawings show parking in the front garden of the proposed house, which could only be accessed from Wigmore Road, which contains a wide verge with three, mature Silver Birch trees opposite the site. The verge already provides cross-overs to the garages between the open flanks of the pairs of houses, and in this respect the proposal would be little different. While I appreciate the concern of the Council to protect the trees, there appeared to me to be sufficient space between the trees to allow a car to pass, and there is no evidence that the health of these trees would be adversely affected by the proposal.
7. I appreciate that the proposal would resemble the form and alignment of the houses on this side of Wigmore Road and use matching materials, but this does not outweigh the harm from the reduction in the green character and the loss of spaciousness resulting from the development. I note that No 2 has consent for a side and front extension, but this would have less impact on the spaciousness of the estate than this development of a separate dwelling. The appellant contests the claim of the Council regarding the ownership of part of the land, however, my finding concerns the nature of the land, its contribution to the character of the area and the impact of the proposed development on it, rather than who owns it.
8. My attention has been drawn to the development of a house beside 18 Huntsmoor Road. Unlike in this case, where the proposed house would stand between the flank of one neighbour and the rear of another, No 18 had no other plots between its flank and the street, and the extent of the open space between that site and the street remained substantial after the development. Its impact on the spaciousness of the area is quite different. There is little parallel between that consent and the proposal in this case which outweighs the harm identified above.
9. The proposal would therefore be contrary to Policies EM5 and EM10 of the Basingstoke and Deane Local Plan 2016 which resist the loss of public and private open space and seek development which contributes to local distinctiveness having regard to the layout of the surrounding area and the relationship to neighbouring buildings. It would conflict too with the guidance in the Framework¹ that development should respond to local character. It would also run against the advice in the Planning Practice Guidance² which suggests that development should seek to promote character in townscape and landscape by responding to and reinforcing locally distinctive patterns of development.

Other Matters

10. Whilst I have considered concerns from neighbours including in relation to traffic congestion, loss of light and overlooking, given my findings on the main issue above, these have not led me to a different overall conclusion.

¹ DCLG National Planning Policy Framework, March 2012, paragraph 58

² Planning Practice Guidance, DCLG 2014 as amended, paragraph 007, ID 26-007-20140306

Conclusion

11. Whilst the development would provide a modest benefit of one additional house to local housing supply and it would not harm trees in the highway, this is outweighed by the unacceptable harm it would cause to the character and appearance of the area, which is in clear conflict with the policies of the development plan. For the reasons given above, and taking account of all matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Patrick Whelan

INSPECTOR