
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 30 January 2017

by Jonathan Manning BSc (Hons) MA MRTPI

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

Decision date: 21 February 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/N0410/W/16/3162288

15 Huntercombe Lane North, Slough, SL6 0LF

- 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 Chris Comer against the decision of South Bucks District Council.
 - The application Ref 16/01443/FUL, dated 3 August 2016, was refused by notice dated 28 September 2016.
 - The development proposed is construction of a detached chalet bungalow with vehicular access.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue of the appeal is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

3. The appeal site address is 15 Huntercombe Lane North, however, the proposed dwelling would face onto Huntercombe Close, which is a relatively small cul-de-sac. I observed that Huntercombe Close accommodates a variety of dwelling types, which includes detached and semi-detached two- storey properties, as well as chalet style bungalows. I accept the appellant's view that the southern side of Huntercombe Close has a more irregular development pattern than the northern side. Although, despite this variation, it is clear that the existing properties all have fairly consistent and generous spacing between them, along with reasonably sized plots. This gives the cul-de-sac a spacious character and appearance.
 4. The proposal would result in the subdivision of the existing curtilage of No 15 and the construction of a chalet style bungalow. The proposed dwelling would be located approximately 1 metre from the boundary with the existing property at No 1a Huntercombe Close and in the region of only 1.5 metres from the closest part of No 1a itself. Whilst the front of the two properties would be some 4 metres apart, I consider that the close relationship towards the back of the properties would be clearly evident within the street scene. This relationship would be in direct contrast to the existing pattern of development identified above, where the existing dwellings generally have a generous level of spacing between them. In my view, the close proximity of the proposed dwelling to the eastern elevation of No 1a would in its own right result in an
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incongruous feature in the street scene. Whilst No 16 and No 17 Huntercombe Close, which lie opposite the appeal site, extend up to their existing flank boundaries with each other, this is at ground floor level associated with their garages. A good sense of spaciousness is retained by the generous gap maintained between the two properties at first floor level.

5. Despite the proposed plot having a reasonably sized rear garden of some 8 metres in length, the proposed dwelling would sit tightly within its proposed curtilage width, with approximately a 1 metre gap on its western boundary and only a 0.5 metre gap on its eastern boundary. Whilst No 15 would retain a suitably sized plot, the width of the new plot would be noticeably smaller than the vast majority of the others in the cul-de-sac and would have a markedly greater density than the existing plots in Huntercombe Close. This would run contrary to the existing pattern of development. For all of the above reasons, I consider that the scheme would appear overly cramped and would cause demonstrable harm to the spacious character and appearance of the area.
6. I have been made aware of a previous appeal decision¹ on the appeal site. Whilst this would have been for a two-storey dwelling and would have been sited slightly further forward within the plot, I consider that the previous scheme is still relatively comparable. In that case the Inspector stated *'...the space to the rear of No. 15 has already been substantially reduced by the subdivision of the plot for No. 1A Huntercombe Close. The further subdivision now proposed would in my view result in a cramped development which would crowd too closely both to the original house and to No 1A. Bearing in mind the generally spacious character of the remaining development within the Close, I consider that the development proposed in Appeal B would be harmful to the character of the street scene in Huntercombe Close'*. I consider that this adds weight to my own findings.
7. The appellant has made extensive reference to two other developments within proximity to the appeal site, at Nos 13 & 13a and Nos 17 & 17a Huntercombe Lane North, in terms of plot size, width and spacing between the properties. However, in both cases the front elevations of the existing properties face onto Huntercombe Lane North rather than Huntercombe Close. I consider that these properties read as part of the street scene along Huntercombe Lane North, which has a different character and appearance to Huntercombe Close. Further, when stood within Huntercombe Close, the relationship of Nos 13 & 13a and Nos 17 & 17a to each other are not readily apparent. For these reasons, these examples do not therefore affect my above findings.
8. The appellant has brought my attention to the South Bucks Townscape Character Study, which sets out that the character of the wider area includes later styles of housing that have a different character and that the area as a whole has a high density. I acknowledge such matters, however, this description covers a relatively wide area and does not in my view, relate particularly well to the character and appearance that I observed within Huntercombe Close itself. Consequently, I consider that this does not alter my findings.
9. In conclusion on this matter, for all of the above reasons, the proposal would result in an incongruous form of development that would appear overly cramped. This would cause harm to the spacious character and appearance of

¹ T/APP/N0410/A/95/258088/P8, dated 8 February 1996.

Huntercombe Close. The scheme therefore runs contrary to Policies H9 'Residential Layout and Design' and EP3 'The Use, Design and Layout of Development' of the South Bucks District Local Plan (1999) and Policy CP8 'Built and Historic Environment' of the South Bucks Core Strategy (2011). I also consider that the scheme runs contrary to Section 7 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) that requires good design.

Other matters

10. I acknowledge that the appeal site is well located in terms of access to local services and facilities. Further, I acknowledge the need to make full and effective use of land. However, such matters must be weighed against the harm that would result from the scheme and I consider that these are not sufficient individually or in combination, to outweigh the identified harm.
11. I acknowledge that changes have been made to the scheme, in terms of scale and form since a previous proposal was refused by the Council and these have overcome several of the Council's previous concerns. However, I must consider the proposal on its own individual merits.
12. Interested parties have raised a number of other concerns. However, as I am dismissing the appeal on other grounds such matters do not affect my overall conclusion. Consequently, such matters have not had a significant bearing on my decision.

Conclusion

13. For the reasons set out above and having regard to all other matters raised, there are no material considerations that outweigh the identified harm and associated development plan conflict. Whilst acknowledging the presumption in favour of sustainable development set out within the Framework, in this instance, I consider that the scheme does not represent sustainable development. The appeal is therefore dismissed.

Jonathan Manning

INSPECTOR