
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 23 March 2017

by H Butcher BSc (Hons) MSc MRTPI

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

Decision date: 27 April 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/H1705/W/16/3162682

Beechcroft, Harts Lane, Burghclere, RG20 9JN

- 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 & Mrs Martin against the decision of Basingstoke & Deane Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 16/02444/FUL, dated 4 July 2016, was refused by notice dated 12 September 2016.
 - The development proposed is the erection of a one-and-a half-storey 4-bed dwellinghouse with attached double garage; partial demolition of Beechcroft (4-bed dwelling retained) and creation of a new access to Harts Lane to serve the proposed dwelling.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the development on the character and appearance of the surrounding area. A second reason for refusal relating to parking and highway safety has been withdrawn by the Council following the submission of further information. Therefore, there is no need for me to take this matter any further.

Reasons

3. Beechcroft is a detached bungalow. It sits behind a gated drive and occupies a relatively deep 'L' shaped plot which is wider to the rear. It forms part of a row of detached dwellings of various designs and styles on the north side of Harts Lane. These properties, generally speaking, enjoy deep rear gardens behind which there is a wooded area. In the wider area generally, such as the south side of Harts Lane, there are large areas of open countryside. Together this gives this row of properties a spacious, loose knit and semi-rural character.
 4. The Burghclere Village Design Statement (2002) (VDS) advises that new buildings should retain a spacious feel between nearby dwellings and relate to the landscape setting. It also seeks to resist proposals that have an urbanising influence. Although I note the appellant's comment that this document is no longer up to date as there has been development along Harts Lane since its publication, nevertheless, given the spacious, semi-rural character of the area I describe above, I consider the advice within it to still be relevant.
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5. The proposal is for the erection of a one-and-a-half storey four bedroom dwelling to the rear of Beechcroft. It would sit relatively close to the existing property, some 16m away, which would result in a dramatically reduced rear garden. This would be further constrained by a tapered side boundary to allow vehicular access to the new dwelling. Although the minimum garden size standards set out in the Council's Residential Amenity Design Guidance would be met such a reduced garden would, nevertheless, appear out of character in its immediate context. Other gardens of a similar size referred to by the appellant belong to semi-detached and terrace properties in the wider area. The new dwelling would also occupy nearly the whole width of the site and it would be wider than the retained dwelling, part of which is to be demolished to allow for the new access. Furthermore, the new dwelling would be taller than the existing, despite it being set into the land which naturally rises from the front to the rear of the site.
6. With the above points in mind the spacious and semi-rural character which currently exists around Beechcroft would be completely lost and a hard urbanised environment, dominated by the built form and hard landscaping would be created. This would be completely at odds with the general character and pattern of development along the row of properties to which Beechcroft belongs and would be something of an anomaly. Although the plot division might not be immediately apparent from Harts Lane it would be visible from Beechcroft and the proposed dwelling, and views would also be possible from the immediate neighbouring properties. As such it would be visually harmful in respect of the private realm.
7. For the above reasons the development would be harmful to the character and appearance of the surrounding area. Consequently it would conflict with the relevant provisions of Policies EM1 and EM10 of the Basingstoke and Deane Local Plan (2011-2029) which require new development to be of high quality which is sympathetic to the character and visual quality of the area in which it is located.
8. Whilst there have been residential developments in the wider area where sites have been intensified and the original linear form of development has been lost, these are, in the main, larger, more comprehensive developments and as such are not directly comparable. Notwithstanding this, they do not alter my conclusion that the development before me would be out of character with its immediate context. I have also considered an application at the adjacent property Breach Copse for new dwellings (ref BDB/69770). Although this was not refused specifically on the principle of back land development it did raise issues in respect of character and appearance, broadly similar to my concerns in respect of this appeal. It does not, therefore, alter my findings above.
9. I note that a lawful development certificate for a detached outbuilding of a similar footprint and siting to the proposed dwelling has been granted (ref 16/01428/LDPO). However, not only would the use of this be materially different, it would be a lower flat roofed structure and it would not require separate areas of hardstanding for access and parking. Nor would it result in the subdivision of the original plot. I can therefore only afford this matter limited weight.

Conclusion

10. I have had regard to all matters raised, including the fact that the proposal would make a modest contribution to local housing supply, but conclude that this would not outweigh the harm I have found. The appeal is therefore dismissed.

Hayley Butcher

INSPECTOR