
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 8 January 2018

by David Reed BSc DipTP DMS MRTPI

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

Decision date: 6 February 2018

Appeal Ref: APP/D3830/W/17/3181272

The Park Farm, Snow Hill, Crawley Down, Crawley RH10 3EE

- 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 J Lendon against the decision of Mid Sussex District Council.
 - The application Ref DM/17/1020, dated 24 February 2017, was refused by notice dated 5 June 2017.
 - The development proposed is the demolition of the existing dwelling, construction of two new 5-bedroom, two storey dwellings, each with separate garage. New access driveway.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are:
 - the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area; and
 - whether the proposal would contribute to a sustainable pattern of development.

Reasons

Character and appearance

3. The proposal is for the demolition of an existing dwelling and its replacement with two detached dwellings with separate garages on a large rectangular site on the southern side of the A264 Snow Hill. The site lies well outside the built up area boundaries of both Crawley Down and Copthorne as defined by the Mid Sussex Local Plan 2004 (MSLP) and hence in the countryside for planning policy purposes. There is no dispute that a one for one replacement of the existing dwelling would be acceptable under MSLP Policy H12 but a second dwelling would be contrary to Policy C1 which restricts further housing in the countryside to certain limited categories, none of which apply in this case. However, the Council is unable to demonstrate a five year supply of deliverable housing sites and consequently policies for the supply of housing cannot be considered up to date. This is an important factor to be taken into account alongside the policy objection.
4. The appeal site is located in an area with scattered roadside housing situated amongst small fields and other open land. The site itself lies between a pair of semi-detached houses on one side and a detached house set in large grounds

on the other, with two further detached houses opposite and some scattered housing some distance to the south. With a mixture of house types nearby, the Council accept that the scale, design and appearance of the individual houses would not be out of character with the area.

5. However, the proposal involves the replacement of one dwelling with two. The existing property, situated behind an unbroken frontage hedgerow and with its access taken from a private road to one side, appears discreet when seen from the road. In contrast, the proposal would introduce an access drive through the frontage hedgerow to serve one of the properties, thus removing part of the current screening and opening up the site to views of the new house with associated garage, hardstanding and parked cars. Although the loss of hedge could be mitigated by further planting within the site, the access drive would remain obvious, clearly revealing the additional house.
6. Whilst there are several roadside houses with access drives on either side and opposite the site which are readily apparent to passers-by, the result would be the loss of the continuous frontage hedgerow and the consolidation of built development along the busy A264. This would erode the low density, generally verdant character of the roadside housing along Snow Hill and contribute to the lengthy stretch of ribbon development on the southern side of the road which stretches from the commercial site to the east as far as Ladymead to the west.
7. For these reasons the proposal would cause significant harm to the character and appearance of the area. Whilst the proposal would not materially conflict with many of the policies quoted in the Council's decision notice there would be a direct conflict with Policy CDNP08 of the Crawley Down Neighbourhood Plan made in 2016. This precludes development which would contribute to 'ribbon development' along the roads linking the village to the neighbouring settlements of Copthorne, Felbridge, Turners Hill and Crawley. The plan explains that the restriction of development between the village and neighbouring communities is an overwhelming concern of residents and the gaps are particularly critical if separate village identities are to be maintained¹.

Sustainable pattern of development

8. The site lies a short distance to the west of a petrol filling station with a small 'costcutter express' convenience store and bus stops with regular services to East Grinstead and Caterham. These are accessed by a continuous footway along the road with some street lighting and there are also some footpaths linking to the surrounding area. However, Crawley Down village, which offers a wide range of services and facilities, lies too far away to be within easy walking distance and involves using busy roads which would deter cycling. Given these circumstances the appellant accepts the occupiers would often travel by car, and although Three Bridges station is only 10 minutes away, this would also probably be reached by car. With other properties nearby the site is not isolated, but the location would be a significant disadvantage of the scheme in conflict with paragraphs 30 and 95 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) which support a pattern of development to facilitate the use of sustainable modes of transport in order to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
9. For these reasons the proposal would not contribute to a sustainable pattern of development and would conflict with MSLP Policy T4 and Policy CDNP10 of the

¹ Paragraphs 52 and 55.

Neighbourhood Plan. These seek to restrict development to built up areas, minimise the increase in private car trips and ensure adequate sustainable transport links are available to the principal village facilities including the village centre, primary school, health centre and recreation open space.

10. The appellant draws attention to a recent planning permission for a dwelling at Hophurst Lane, Crawley Down². However, that site lies adjacent to the built up area boundary of the village and is thus not comparable to the current appeal.

Conclusion

11. The proposal would provide an additional high quality family sized dwelling which would make a small but useful contribution towards the housing needs of the district given the current shortfall in housing land supply. The existing rather run down property would also be replaced by a high quality modern dwelling. The two houses would be built to high environmental standards and the biodiversity of the site would be improved by various enhancement measures. The proposal would also have real social and economic benefits for the area including construction jobs, ongoing expenditure in local shops and services and increased local taxation including new homes bonus.
12. Nevertheless, having regard to the significant objections identified under the two main issues, the adverse impacts of the proposal would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits when assessed against the policies of the NPPF as a whole. The appeal should therefore be dismissed.

David Reed

INSPECTOR

² Ref. DM/15/4478