

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 20 August 2019

by K Savage BA MPlan MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 17 September 2019

Appeal Ref: APP/N1730/W/19/3229534

Nursery View, Reading Road, Eversley, Hook RG27 0NJ

- 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 Luke Munro against the decision of Hart District Council.
 - The application Ref 18/02868/FUL, dated 19 December 2018, was refused by notice dated 28 February 2019.
 - The development proposed is demolition of garage and erection of detached dwelling and garage with new access for existing dwelling.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matter

2. The application form gives the name of the dwelling on the appeal site as 'Corbiere'. However, the appeal form and decision notice refer to the dwelling as 'Nursery View', so I have used that name in the site address above.

Main Issues

3. The main issues are the effect of the proposal on i) the character and appearance of the area, and ii) the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area.

Reasons

Character and appearance

4. The appeal site is located within a concentration of development along Reading Road which forms part of the village of Eversley. The site comprises a two storey, detached dwelling on a narrow, deep plot. The dwelling has an area for parking to the front with a deep garden laid to grass at the rear. Plots of a similar shape exist to either side of the appeal site and further to the east.
5. There is variety to the street scene in terms of the design and scale of buildings, with detached, semi-detached and terraced dwellings all present along Reading Road. There is also variety to the building lines with some properties set deeper into their plots, such as the next door dwelling Papram. Exceptions to this pattern include the purpose built cul-de-sac at Paul's Field and an example of backland development at Woodbury Lodge. However, I observed the prevailing pattern of development on the northern side of Reading Road to be linear with single dwellings facing the road on deep plots

- and open countryside to the rear, a pattern which extends from the end dwelling at Happy Review up to and beyond the Golden Pot public house.
6. The proposal would create a tandem arrangement which would divide the rear garden of the existing dwelling and place a substantial detached dwelling behind and directly facing it. The addition of a second dwelling on the site would create a denser, more urban form of development at odds with the prevailing linear pattern and contrary to the rhythm, shape and spacious depth of plots along Reading Road. Moreover, it would detract from the semi-rural character of the rear gardens which overlook the open countryside to the rear.
 7. I recognise that a backland development exists close by where Woodbury Lodge sits behind the White House. However, this appears to be an isolated example of such development. I saw these two properties sit on demonstrably wider plots than the appeal site and the access to the rear dwelling stands apart from the front dwelling, separated by an area of retained side garden. The rear dwelling's offset position means it is visible from Reading Road and Paul's Field to the side. This separation of the entrance, the wider plot and offset position create a sense of Woodbury Lodge forming a continuation of the street scene, despite its recessed position.
 8. These factors differ from the appeal site where a new, narrow driveway would be formed immediately next to the existing dwelling following demolition of the attached garage, set tight between the dwelling and side boundary. This access arrangement would create a discordant gap in a line of dwellings which span the majority of the width of their plots. The already slender plot of the existing dwelling would be further narrowed by the insertion of the access and combined with the reduced garden would result in the existing dwelling appearing unduly cramped. In this respect, the proposal would differ from the more open, public entrances to Paul's Field and Jarvis Close.
 9. Moreover, the combined massing of the proposed dwelling and garage would appear to exceed the footprint of the retained dwelling, which would be perceptible in views through the driveway and from neighbouring properties and would add to the incongruous effect of the proposed dwelling in this backland position. As such, I disagree with the appellant that the proposal would represent an improved view compared to the existing attached garage, which I saw matches the materials of the existing dwelling and has a relatively muted presence in the street scene.
 10. I have also had regard to the appellant's points about the influence of the plant nursery on the street scene. I accept it forms a prominent feature on the opposite side due to its plot size, but its buildings are largely low glasshouses which do not, in my view, compete with the massing and presence of the dwellings opposite, nor do they dilute the strong linear pattern of development on the northern side, which I have found would be harmed by the proposal.
 11. The appellant refers to planning permissions granted for dwellings nearby, including on Hollybush Lane. However, in the absence of full particulars of these proposals, I cannot be certain that they are comparable to the appeal before me, which I have duly considered on its own merits.
 12. For the foregoing reasons, therefore, I find the proposal would harm the character and appearance of the area, and would conflict with Policies GEN1, GEN4 and RUR20 of the Hart District Local Plan (Replacement) 1996-2006 and

the First Alteration to the Hart District Local Plan (Replacement) 1996-2006, which taken together require development to be in keeping with local character and improve urban design quality, having regard to, amongst other things, density, scale, design, massing, layout and siting. The proposal would also conflict with the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) which states that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development.

Thames Basin Heaths SPA

13. The site is within influence of the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (SPA) which qualifies for protection as a habitat for rare ground nesting birds. It is evidenced that new residential development in this location would, in combination with other development elsewhere, increase visitor pressure within the SPA leading to a significant harmful effect on its integrity through recreational activities, such as dog walking, which cause disturbance to the protected species and habitats.
14. The Council's Interim Avoidance Strategy for the Thames Basin Heaths SPA (November 2010) sets out that the effect of increased visitor pressure can be mitigated through the provision of Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) and Strategic Access Management and Monitoring measures (SAMM). SANG may be provided by the developer subject to certain criteria or by way of a financial contribution. SAMM can only be met through a financial contribution.
15. No planning obligation has been submitted by the appellant. However, given my findings on the first main issue, the circumstances that could have led to the granting of planning permission are not present. Therefore, it is not necessary for me to further consider the appropriateness and means of delivery of mitigation within an Appropriate Assessment, since the harm and development plan conflict arising from the first main issue would not be reduced in their light.

Other Matters

16. The Council did not find harm in respect of the effect on parking, access and highway safety; neighbours' living conditions; trees, biodiversity or drainage. Neither the evidence before me nor my observations on site lead me to different conclusions on these matters. A lack of harm in these respects is a neutral consideration weighing neither for nor against the proposal.
17. Whilst there would be benefits to the proposal from an additional dwelling to the housing stock, economic activity generated by its construction, expenditure in the local area by occupants and proposed ecological enhancements, these would in each case be limited given the scale of the proposal, and taken together would not outweigh the harm identified.

Conclusion

18. I find that the proposal would conflict with the development plan when read as a whole. There are no other matters, including the Framework, that outweigh this conflict. Therefore, taking into account all matters raised, the appeal is dismissed.

K Savage

INSPECTOR