



## Appeal Decision

Site Visit made on 2 June 2021

**by Jonathan Edwards BSc(Hons) DipTP MRTPI**

**an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State**

**Decision date: 08 June 2021**

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**Appeal Ref: APP/K0425/W/21/3269936**

**3 Kestrel Drive, Hazlemere, High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire HP15 7JL**

- 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 Mrs L Cameron against the decision of Buckinghamshire Council - West Area (Wycombe).
  - The application Ref 20/05979/FUL, dated 15 March 2020, was refused by notice dated 18 December 2020.
  - The development proposed is demolition of existing bungalow and garage. Erection of 2 no. 4 bed detached houses, one with an integral garage and one with a detached double garage.
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### Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

### Main Issue

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

### Reasons

3. The appeal property is a bungalow at the end of a cul-de-sac in a residential area. Other properties on Kestrel Drive are of a similar appearance to each other with low eaves and a wide, flat roofed dormer window on the front roof slope. Houses of a different style and with gable frontages are on Inkerman Drive that leads to Kestrel Drive, although these are further away from the appeal site. All of the nearby houses are detached with small gaps in between.
4. The bungalow to be demolished is set back on the plot and screened to a degree by trees and bushes. A cypress hedge would be retained but the houses would be set further forward than the bungalow and so it is likely that the scheme would require the removal of some vegetation. As such, the houses would be clearly seen from the road.
5. The first floor of the proposed dwellings would not be in the roof space and so the eaves would be higher than on the adjoining properties. Also, the proposed hipped roofs would be unusual to the area. Moreover, the houses would have a significant degree of vertical alignment between ground and first floor windows. The resulting vertical emphasis would be markedly at odds with the adjacent properties which have a strong horizontal emphasis due to the wide front dormers and low eaves heights.
6. The existing bungalow on the site is of a different style and form to the adjoining properties, although it is not easily seen with its neighbours. In contrast, the proposed units would be significantly more noticeable and would be clearly viewed with the other properties in Kestrel Drive. As such, the stark

difference in form and design of the proposed properties compared to the nearest units would be readily apparent.

7. There is already a marked change in the house design along the road where the gable frontage properties on Inkerman Drive are next to units with front roof slopes and dormers. However, the proposed dwellings bear no resemblance in style or form to either of the dwelling types on the street. Also, while there is some variation in the wider area, local housing generally tends to reflect a typical 1960's or 1970's style. No nearby dwellings of a similar appearance to the proposal has been brought to my attention. Consequently, the proposed housing would fail to reflect local distinctiveness.
8. The orientation and scale of the proposal would accord with nearby development and appropriate external materials could be secured through a planning condition. The gaps between the houses and the side boundaries would be consistent with those in the road and so the scheme would not look unduly cramped. However, acceptability in these regards fails to address the marked incongruity of the proposal's design. The fact that pre-application advice was sought and that the scheme has been drawn up by an award winning designer does not influence my views in respect of this main issue.
9. For the above reasons, I conclude the proposal would harm the character and appearance of the area. In these regards, it would not accord with policies CP9 and DM35 of the Wycombe District Local Plan 2019. Amongst other things, these require development to respect the distinctive character of the area.

### **Other Matters**

10. Regulations<sup>1</sup> impose a duty on me to consider whether European protected species, including bats, would be affected by the proposal. The Council indicate that the demolition of the bungalow may affect a bat roost but suggest that this matter can be dealt with by planning condition. Such an approach would be contrary to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister Circular 06/2005 which states it is essential to ascertain the presence or otherwise of protected species before granting planning permission. However, I need not consider this matter further as the appeal has failed. A finding that the proposal would be acceptable in these regards would not affect my conclusion on the appeal.

### **Planning Balance and Conclusion**

11. The proposal would add to the housing stock and would make more effective use of a small site within an existing settlement. I attach positive weight to these factors in my assessment. However, due to the identified harm, the proposal would not accord with the development plan policies when read as a whole. The benefits are modest as the scheme would lead to a single additional unit. Therefore, they are of insufficient weight to allow the appeal contrary to the development plan policies.
12. For the reasons given above, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

*Jonathan Edwards*

INSPECTOR

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<sup>1</sup> The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended)