



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 13 April 2021 by Ms S Maur

Decision by K Taylor BSc (Hons) PGDip MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 11 June 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/H1705/D/21/3266996

Site Address: 6 Weir Vale Cottages, Sydmonton Road, Old Burghclere, RG20 9NR

- 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 Sam Harvey against the decision of Basingstoke and Deane Council.
 - The application Ref 20/02482/HSE, dated 8 September 2020, was refused by notice dated 4 November 2020.
 - The development proposed is new vehicle access and parking to front of property.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Appeal Procedure

2. The site visit was undertaken by an Appeal Planning Officer whose recommendation is set out below and to which the Inspector has had regard before deciding the appeal.

Procedural Matter

3. Burghclere Parish Neighbourhood Plan is currently emerging, and a submission plan was submitted in 2019. This has been taken into account.

Main Issues

4. The main issues in this appeal are the effect of development on:
 - the character and appearance of the area and the need to conserve the landscape and scenic beauty of the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty; and
 - highway safety.

Reasons for the Recommendation

Character and Appearance

5. The site is located within the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), below Watership Down. The landscape character of the area is rural with limited development, open and attractive. The site sits next to two adjoining terrace houses to the west, with similar character and appearance to the appeal dwelling. There is another set of three terraced houses of similar character and appearance on the other side of the parking site. Both of these

terraces are located on the northern side of the highway, with these properties set far back from the road with a long front garden, path and picket gate, fronted by a grass verge. This results in a verdant appearance which contributes significantly to the character of the area.

6. The development proposed involves new vehicle access and parking to the front of the property. This would allow for three cars to be parked with room to manoeuvre and would involve the removal of the existing path, as well as hedgerows to the west and the front of the site boundary and trees to the east within the plot. This access point would extend over the land currently forming a grass verge.
7. The proposed driveway would result in a significant reduction in the grassed and vegetated area to the front of the property. This would be at odds with the character of the adjoining terraced houses and the nearby terrace housing in the close vicinity. It would cause an unbalanced and unsymmetrical feel to the existing layout of the gardens and therefore the proposed arrangement would be uncomfortable to the surrounding area, appearing out of character and significantly reducing the verdant appearance of the area.
8. Although the existing hedgerows and the trees are not protected, they form a key feature of this area along with the grass verge. The provision of a hard surface which is permeable, may also, in itself, not require the grant of planning permission. However, the driveway proposed is associated with the access and only likely to be provided where a vehicular access is provided. The loss of this vegetation and provision of the drive is only likely to take place as part of the proposed development. Therefore, weight can be given to the harm that would arise from this.
9. Although there are driveways and access entrances within the vicinity, these appear on the south side of the road and are associated with the detached dwellings which have a different character.
10. In addition, this proposal would not accord with Policies B7, B10 and B11 of the Burghclere Parish Neighbourhood Plan 2011 - 2036 (Submission Plan) which requires development to positively contribute to the character and distinctiveness of the Parish. However, because this plan is not yet 'made', I only give the conflict with it moderate weight.
11. In light of the above, it is concluded that the development would result in a significant degree of harm to the character and appearance of the surrounding area. Moreover, because of this, it would also fail to conserve the landscape and scenic beauty of the AONB. This would be contrary Policies EM1 and EM10 of the Basingstoke and Deane Local Plan (2011 to 2029) which seek to permit development that are of high quality and are sympathetic to and respect the character and appearance of the AONB.

Highway Safety

12. The proposed driveway and access would be sited on a straight road. The existing parking for the site is accessed to the west and located to the rear of the garden of the property. It is shared with the occupiers of the adjoining properties. There are a number of driveways within the vicinity, which serve properties on the opposite side of the road.

13. During the site visit, I observed that traffic speeds were appropriate for this type of thoroughfare. Due to the grass verge and straight road, as well as the removal of the hedgerows, sufficient visibility would be achieved. The addition of one entrance where there would be adequate visibility, would not cause any substantial harm to highway safety.
14. This would accord with Policy CN9 of the Basingstoke and Deane Local Plan (2011 to 2029) which seeks to secure safe, suitable and convenient access for new development.

Other Matters

15. The existing situation with parking at the rear would be less convenient than the proposed arrangement, however rear parking is not uncommon. Even if the current parking provision available falls below the Council's standards, this is an existing situation which also commonly arises. As such these benefits to the appellant should be given only limited weight.

Conclusion and Recommendation

16. Although the proposed development would not result in harm to highway safety, this is a neutral matter in the overall consideration of this appeal. The benefits to the appellant would not mitigate or outweigh the significant harm that would be caused to the character and appearance of the site and AONB.
17. Based on the above, and having regard to all matters raised, I recommend that the appeal should be dismissed.

Ms S Maur

APPEAL PLANNING OFFICER

Inspector's Decision

18. I have considered all the submitted evidence and the Appeal Planning Officer's report and on that basis the appeal is dismissed.

K Taylor

INSPECTOR