
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 20 April 2022

by Benjamin Webb BA(Hons) MA MA MSc PGDip(UD) MRTPI IHBC

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 03 May 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/C1760/W/21/3289029

Little Beeches, Braishfield Road, Crook Hill SO51 0QB

- 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 Talisman Homes (West) Ltd against the decision of Test Valley Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 19/01620/FULLS, dated 26 June 2019, was refused by notice dated 16 June 2021.
 - The development proposed is described as construction of two detached houses and associated garaging.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue are the effects of the development on:
 - the living conditions of occupants of Little Beeches, Oakdene and The Cottage with specific regard to noise-related disturbance; and
 - the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

Living conditions

3. Little Beeches is a modest single storey bungalow which stands on a deep plot on the west side of Braishfield Road. Oakdene, which is similarly located within its plot, stands to the north, and The Cottage, which is set further back, stands to the south. The development would involve construction of 2 further bungalows to the rear of Little Beeches, with the access along its north side extending the line of the existing driveway.
4. Little Beeches features windows to habitable rooms in all its elevations, thus including on its north side. The latter also incorporates the main entrance. Very little defensible space would be left between the north elevation and the proposed access, and negligible scope would exist for screening between. The exposure of the elevation and the openings within it to both the access and to the movement of vehicles along it would therefore be direct.
5. As the principal bedroom and living room are each located on the south side of the bungalow, they would not be directly affected. Less sensitive spaces including a bathroom, hall and kitchen are located on the north side, however

there is also a room described as a bedroom. Given the direct exposure of the elevation to the access, and given the lack of any clear means of mitigating the effect within the context of the scheme as proposed, considerable scope would exist for noise-related disturbance. This would be visually reinforced by the clear perception of vehicles passing in close proximity to the windows and the front door.

6. Background noise is generated by traffic on Braishfield Road, and there is little overall sense of tranquillity. Nonetheless, Little Beeches is set well back from the frontage and is partially screened. As such it lacks the direct exposure to vehicle movements and noise unrelated to its use that would arise from the proposed development.
7. It is likely that vehicles using the access would be slow moving, and a solid surface rather than gravel could be laid. Even so, vehicles accessing the proposed bungalows would generate noise, and the fact that the access would serve no more than 2 additional bungalows would not make this noise any more acceptable.
8. Vehicle movements adjacent to the boundary with Oakdedene already occur in relation to the use of Little Beeches. Whilst it is likely that an increase in such movements would be perceptible from adjacent parts of Oakdene, the degree of exposure would be modest. The boundary is otherwise well screened, including by a garage, and there is a reasonable level of separation. As such it is unlikely that there would be any unacceptable effect.
9. The Cottage would not be directly exposed to the access and would have only limited exposure to the proposed parking/turning space. In this regard a garage would be built next to the boundary, at a similar depth to that at The Cottage, and Kendal to its south. This would provide a good degree of separation and screening, particularly in relation to ground floor windows. Here the Council's objection in relation to a first floor bedroom window is not clearly understood, given that no such window appears to exist. Again, no unacceptable harm would be caused.
10. For the reasons outlined above, the development would not have an any unacceptable effect on the living conditions of occupants of Oakdene and The Cottage in relation to noise-related disturbance. Unacceptable adverse effects would however arise in relation to occupants of Little Beeches. The development would therefore conflict with Policy LHW4 of the Test Valley Borough Council Revised Local Plan (LP) which amongst other things requires development provide for the amenity of neighbouring properties.

Character and appearance

11. Little Beeches and its neighbours form part of a mixed group of dwellings. These are generally set well back from the road frontage, but occupy various positions within their plots. There is as such no clear consistency within the group as a whole.
12. As established above, the appeal scheme would see 2 bungalows constructed to the rear of Little Beeches. This arrangement is not characteristic of development within the group. Some depth to the layout is nonetheless provided where dwellings located to the rear of those at the frontage are served by a separate access. The most immediate examples visible from the

site are 2 bungalows located to the south. Some further depth is created by large outbuildings where these are constructed to the rear of dwellings. This and the above being so, the siting of the proposed bungalows would not appear or be perceived as being obviously at odds with any existing pattern. This would be the case both in relation to limited fleeting glances from Braishfield Road, and in similarly limited views from the footpath on its opposite side. Consequently, the development would cause no harm.

13. For the reasons outlined above I conclude that the effects of the development on the character and appearance of the area would be acceptable. The development would therefore comply with Policy E1 of the LP to the extent that this requires development to integrate, respect and complement the character of the area, and supporting guidance in the Braishfield Village Design Statement.

Other Matters

14. The development would provide 2 additional dwellings in an appropriate location, both helping to meet a general demand for housing and making more efficient use of the plot. Nonetheless, the related social and economic benefits would not outweigh harm caused by the poor living conditions created for occupants of Little Beeches.
15. The application was partly refused on the basis that it would fail to mitigate its likely significant effects on the integrity of the Solent and Southampton Water Special Protection Area (SPA) and Solent Maritime Special Area of Conservation (SAC), due to increased recreational pressure. Separate likely significant effects on the integrity of the New Forest SPA and Mottisfont Bat SAC were also identified during the Council's determination of the application. The Council accordingly undertook an Appropriate Assessment. This excluded effects on the Mottisfont Bat SAC and concluded that those identified in relation to the New Forest SPA would be mitigated by a financial contribution paid in line with local strategy. Though such payment was indeed made, its use was not secured by any form of legal agreement. Mitigation in relation to the Solent sites was otherwise secured within a Section 106 agreement submitted during the course of the appeal. Had I been minded to allow the appeal and the circumstances thus existed in which planning permission could be granted it would have been necessary to examine the above in greater detail. However, as I am dismissing the appeal for other reasons no further consideration is required.

Conclusion

16. The effects of the development in relation to living conditions would be unacceptable, giving rise to conflict with the development plan. There are no other considerations which alter or outweigh these findings. I therefore conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Benjamin Webb

INSPECTOR