
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 27 June 2022

by Adrian Hunter BA(Hons) BTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 9 August 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/N0410/W/21/3288287
24 Mayflower Way, Beaconsfield HP9 1UE

- 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 Mayflower Living Space Ltd against the decision of Buckinghamshire Council.
 - The application Ref PL/21/2395/FA, dated 11 June 2021, was refused by notice dated 8 October 2021.
 - The development proposed is demolition of existing dwelling and redevelopment of site to provide two pairs of semi-detached dwellings and new vehicular access.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. For the purposes of clarity and precision, I have taken the description of development from the Council's decision notice.
3. Following the submission of the appeal, the results of ecological survey work was submitted. As a result, the Council confirmed that they no longer wish to pursue reason for refusal two. Having reviewed the submitted information, I can see no reason to disagree with this and I have therefore determined the appeal on this basis.
4. In relation to reason for refusal three, during the course of the appeal, the appellant submitted a completed planning obligation. As a result, the Council have confirmed that this reason has now been addressed and they no longer wish to pursue reason for refusal three. Having reviewed the submitted information, I see no reason to disagree with this and I have dealt with the appeal on this basis.

Main Issue

5. The main issue in this appeal is the effect of the proposal upon the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

6. The appeal site comprises a corner plot, located at the junction of Mayflower Way and Crabtree Close. The site is occupied by a detached, two storey dwelling that is surrounded by garden. The site boundaries are extensively landscaped. Access to the appeal site is presently from Crabtree Close.

7. The surrounding development is predominately residential, with the exception of St Thomas Church and its associated church hall to the south-west. Opposite the appeal site, is a three-storey building that has a parade of shops on the ground floor, with apartments above.
8. Surrounding dwellings comprise a mix of detached and semi-detached properties. They are relatively modest in terms of their style and are varied both in their design and materials. In general, the roofscape is also relatively simple, with roofs being pitched, with little or no additions. To the east of the appeal site, there are however a number of more recent developments that include crown roofs. As a consequence, there is no uniformity in terms of the appearance of surrounding buildings. Dwellings are set back from the road, with car parking and turning areas to the front. Front boundaries are landscaped, which creates a relatively verdant feel to the street scene.
9. Whilst the buildings along Mayflower Way, to the west of the appeal site, vary in terms of their set back from the road, they are all set back by a considerable distance. This set back creates a feeling of openness and spaciousness. This pattern is reflected to a similar degree to the east, although in this instance, a number of the dwellings are closer to the road but are still set back so as to maintain this overall character. To my mind however, due to its position and the separation created by Crabtree Way, notwithstanding the presence of the footpath between the appeal site and No 22 Mayflower Way, any development on the appeal site should be seeking to respond to and respect the layout and position of those dwellings to the west.
10. The proposed dwellings, whilst being set back from the front of the site, would be located closer to the road than the existing dwellings to the west. In particular, the proposed dwellings would sit considerably further forward than No 22. As a result, the proposed development would appear as an overly prominent form of development, when seen from Mayflower Way.
11. Whilst the eaves levels of the proposed dwellings would be similar to neighbouring properties, their overall height would be taller than those around them. Due to this additional height, along with the crown roof design and the presence of the dormers, the new dwellings would appear substantially larger than the more modest surrounding dwellings. As a result, the proposed buildings would be of a greater scale, bulk and mass than the neighbouring properties. This additional height, bulk and mass, when viewed within the context of the existing dwellings along the street, would disrupt the existing pattern of development. It would introduce a form of development that would discordantly rise above adjoining dwellings to the west. As a result, the proposal would introduce a form of development that would appear out of scale with and harmful to the character and appearance of the surrounding area.
12. Drawing these matters together, due to the additional height, bulk and mass of the proposed buildings, in combination with their position on the site, the proposed development would discordantly project beyond the neighbouring dwelling and would appear as an incongruous feature within the street scene, out of keeping with the character and appearance of the area.
13. In coming to this conclusion, I have also considered other developments within the vicinity of the appeal site, however, none are sufficiently comparable to the proposal to overcome my conclusion in relation to the harm that would be caused.

14. For the above reasons, I therefore conclude that the proposed development would harm the character and appearance of the area and, as a result, would be contrary to Policy CP8 of the South Bucks District Core Strategy, the principles of the Chiltern and South Bucks Townscape Study, Policies EP3 and H9 of the South Bucks District Local Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework). These policies, amongst other things, requires development to be compatible with the character and appearance of adjoining development and the locality in general.

Other Matters

15. It is submitted by the applicant that, at this moment in time, the Council are unable to demonstrate a 5-year supply of housing land. This position is not contested by the Council. On the basis of the information before me, I see no reason to disagree with this position and I have therefore determined the appeal on this basis.
16. Paragraph 11 of The Framework states that where relevant policies are out of date, permission should be granted unless any adverse impacts of doing so, would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits when assessed against the policies in the Framework taken as a whole or where specific policies in the Framework, indicate that development should be restricted. Footnote 7 does not apply to this case.
17. The proposed development would contribute a net increase of three additional dwellings towards the existing housing stock within the Borough. Whilst this is considered to be a benefit, given the modest scale of the contribution, I find that the adverse impact of the proposed development upon the street scene, significantly and demonstrably outweighs this limited benefit. I note the comments made in relation to the benefits the scheme would provide in increased activity on the street, increased surveillance and making a positive use of the site. However, I find that these issues, either on their own or together, do not significantly and demonstrably outweigh the harm that I have found
18. I note that the Council raise no other issues in relation to highways, trees, drainage or impact on the living conditions of surrounding residents, amongst other things. However, as these are requirements of policy and legislation, the absence of harm in respect of these matters are neutral factors that weigh neither for nor against the development.

Conclusion

19. For the above reasons, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Adrian Hunter

INSPECTOR