



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 14 December 2022

by Hannah Guest BSc (Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 25th January 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/H1705/W/22/3302872

1 Stanton Court, Basingstoke RG21 3FL

- 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 Harvey Hoyte-Bone against the decision of Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 22/00042/FUL, dated 7 January 2022, was refused by notice dated 14 April 2022.
 - The development proposed is the construction of a detached, four-bedroom dwellinghouse.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are the effect of the proposal on the visual amenity and character of the area, and the amount of open space.

Reasons

Character and Appearance

3. Stanton Court is a relatively recent housing development set behind the properties fronting Bounty Road. The houses on Stanton Court have a more dense and tightly packed layout than most of the properties in the surrounding area, which have larger plots and frontages. While it is not uncommon to have denser forms of development in town centre locations, in comparison to the adjacent residential streets, there is a very limited amount of green open space, albeit the houses, access road and parking areas are softened by frontage and roadside planting.
4. Given this, the appeal site, although not visible from Bounty Road, is a prominent feature of the housing development and makes a positive and valuable contribution to the entrance and street scene of Stanton Court. It is visually pleasing and creates an important sense of spaciousness that is experienced by residents and visitors. This sense of spaciousness moderates the dense layout of Stanton Court so that it more closely reflects the more spacious and verdant character found in the neighbouring residential streets. It also helps soften the stark appearance of the side elevation and rear boundary fence of the adjacent property. In coming to this view, I have taken into account that the Basingstoke and Deane Landscape Character Assessment does not identify grassed open spaces as a key characteristic of Basingstoke. The comments of Council officers made as part of the determination of the previous

outline and reserved matters applications relating to Stanton Court¹ also do not lead me to a different conclusion.

5. The proposal would have a similar appearance, footprint, and scale to the other houses on Stanton Court. It would use matching materials and would be positioned in line with the adjacent houses, with a similar amount of space between it and its neighbour. However, infilling the existing green open space with additional built form would significantly erode the sense of spaciousness of the immediate area. Given the proximity of the proposed dwelling to the edge of the highway and adjacent BT Telephone Exchange building, there would be an increased sense of enclosure at the entrance to Stanton Court, and the proposed dwelling would be relatively overbearing on those entering and exiting the development. It may be that the proposal would be acceptable with regards to some of the considerations set out in Policy EM1. However, despite integrating well architecturally, it would significantly harm the character and visual amenity of the immediate area, albeit this harm would be localised.
6. The proposal would retain the existing roadside planting and includes additional landscaping such that there would be sufficient vegetation to soften its appearance. However, while the proposed close board fencing would be similar in appearance to the existing entrance, it would be positioned much closer to the access road, which would further diminish the sense of spaciousness and exacerbate the sense of enclosure and dominance of the proposed dwelling.
7. I acknowledge that hedges could be used to enclose the site, and that this would also erode the spaciousness of the immediate area. However, the hedges would have a far softer and more verdant appearance than the proposed dwelling. They would also likely be shorter and less bulky. Therefore, the degree of harm would be less than the proposal.
8. For the reasons above, the proposal would harm the visual amenity and character of the area. It would conflict with policies EM1 and EM10 of the Basingstoke and Deane Local Plan (2016) (Local Plan). These seek to protect the character and visual amenity of the area and ensure development positively contributes to local distinctiveness, the sense of place and the existing street scene. It would also conflict with the aim of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) to create high quality, beautiful and sustainable places that are visually attractive and sympathetic to local character.

Amount of Open Space

9. The Council's reason for refusal refers to the proposal harming the overall quantum of public open space. However, I understand that the appeal site is private land and is therefore not available for public use. Furthermore, Stanton Court is not far from a range of other open spaces, including The War Memorial Park, which provides a large public open space. Thus, the harm resulting from the loss of the land as a useable open space to the nearby residents would be very limited and has not been determinative in my decision.
10. Notwithstanding this, as set out above, the appeal site makes a valuable and positive visual contribution to the character and appearance of its immediate surroundings. Policy EM5 of the Local Plan relates to Green Infrastructure,

¹ References: 17/03309/OUT & 19/00761/RES

which comprises amenity open space in residential developments, including incidental areas of green space, such as the appeal site. It states that proposals for the redevelopment of public or private open spaces will not be permitted unless one of the criteria set out at bullets d) to f) are met. There is no substantive evidence before me that the proposal has met any of these criteria and, therefore, and despite a significant increase in vegetation, the proposal would conflict with Policy EM5 of the Local Plan.

11. Overall, while the proposal would not harm the quantum of public open space, it would result in the loss of a valuable private open space. Thus, it would harm the borough's network of Green Infrastructure. Although the site is small, its contribution to the visual amenity of the area is significant, as would be the harm arising from its loss. The proposal would conflict with Policy EM5 of the Local Plan and the Landscape, Biodiversity and Trees Supplementary Planning Document (2018). These seek, amongst other things, to protect and enhance the borough's network of Green Infrastructure. It would also conflict with the aims of the Framework to conserve and enhance Green Infrastructure and not build on existing open space.

Planning Balance and Conclusion

12. The Council cannot demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing sites and therefore paragraph 11d) of the Framework falls to be considered. In this case, planning permission should be withheld only where the adverse impacts of the proposal would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits.
13. I have found that the proposal would result in significant harm to the visual amenity and character of the area and the borough's network of Green Infrastructure. The proposal would therefore conflict with the development plan read as a whole. Policies EM1 and EM10 of the Local Plan are broadly consistent with the Framework's aim to create high quality, beautiful and sustainable places that are visually attractive and sympathetic to local character. Policy EM5 is broadly consistent with the Framework's aims to conserve and enhance Green Infrastructure and not build on existing open space.
14. The proposal would provide a dwelling in an accessible location close to services and facilities. Whether or not the site is previously developed land, delivery of housing in this location is supported by the Council's housing strategy and the Framework. This would contribute towards the borough's housing supply and the Government's objective of significantly boosting the supply of new homes. However, while the provision of any additional housing carries significant weight, the single dwelling in this case would make only a modest contribution to the Council's housing supply.
15. Consequently, when the proposal is assessed against the policies in the Framework taken as a whole, the adverse impacts of the proposal would significantly and demonstrably outweigh its benefits. The proposal would not therefore benefit from the presumption in favour of sustainable development.
16. For the reasons above, having had regard to the development plan as a whole and all other relevant material considerations, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Hannah Guest INSPECTOR