



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 4 January 2024

by Bhupinder Thandi BA (Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 06 February 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/R0335/W/23/3316562

20 Honeyhill Road, Bracknell RG42 1YJ

- 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 Mr Michael Griggs against the decision of Bracknell Forest Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 22/00548/FUL, dated 28 June 2022, was refused by notice dated 20 January 2023.
 - The development proposed is removal of existing double garage and construction of a pair of 3 bedroom semi-detached houses with parking.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The revised National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) has been published since the appeal was submitted. My decision is made in the context of the revised Framework. I am satisfied that no interested party has been prejudiced by my approach.
3. The appellant has submitted a complete, signed and dated planning obligation securing a financial contribution towards mitigating the impact of the proposed development upon the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area, following determination of the application. Consequently, the Council advise that they no longer wish to defend the second reason for refusal. I therefore have not addressed this matter in the reasoning below.

Main Issue

4. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development upon the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

5. Honeyhill Road is formed of two storey dwellings arranged in short runs of terrace dwellings and pairs of semi-detached dwellings. The irregular building line, deep open frontages and significant gaps between buildings results in a pleasant spacious residential environment.
6. The area has been planned in such a manner so as to create a sense of openness at road junctions through subservient architecture and by positioning the built form away from the roadside. This serves to further reinforce the spacious nature of the area.

7. The appeal site comprises a pair of garages and part of the side garden of 20 Honeyhill Road and sits on a junction that leads to a block of garages. Whilst the junction is dominated by hardstanding it, nonetheless, positively contributes to the sense of openness.
8. The proposed development would occupy almost the entire width of the site and extend along the access road for a considerable distance. As a result, it would appear as an intrusive form of development eroding the gap between dwellings and the prevailing sense of openness that currently exists at the junction. Whilst it would not sit on a conventional road junction the proposal would still be unduly dominant on account of its overall width and position in the street scene.
9. The extent of the built form and limited spacing between properties, extensive hard surfacing and lack of meaningful soft landscaping would give the impression of a far less spacious and unduly cramped environment. The proposed development would be in stark contrast to the spacious character of the area. As such, it would not successfully integrate into the street and would undermine its spacious character and appearance.
10. Whilst the depth of the gardens would be commensurate with dwellings in the area. The width of the gardens would be narrow and would be at odds with the prevailing character whereby dwellings have wider plots. Whilst the proposed amenity spaces would be usable the limited width would give the impression of a cramped layout.
11. I acknowledge that the design of the dwellings would be sympathetic to nearby buildings and the proposed development would be set back to align with No 20. However, neither of these things are sufficient to overcome the harm that I have identified. The appearance and underutilisation of the garages is not justification to allow development that I have found to be harmful.
12. Consequently, the proposed development would be contrary to Policy EN20 of the Bracknell Forest Borough Local Plan (2002); Policy CS7 of the Core Strategy Development Plan Document (2008); Policies HO1, HO7 and HO8 of the Bracknell Town Neighbourhood Plan (2021) and the Design Supplementary Planning Document (2017) which, amongst other things, require high quality design that respects the established design of the particular neighbourhood; developments to be in sympathy with the appearance and character of the local environment; developments to promote local character and reflect the scale, mass, height and form of neighbouring properties. It would also conflict with the design aims and objectives set out in the Framework.

Other Matters

13. I acknowledge that the proposed development would provide adequate living conditions for future occupiers and would not unduly affect the living conditions of existing neighbouring residents. However, these are largely matters of neutral consequence in the overall balance.

Planning Balance

14. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires planning applications to be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

15. The Council accepts that they cannot demonstrate a deliverable five-year supply of housing land as required by Paragraph 77 of the Framework. Consequently, Paragraph 11 d) of the Framework, which is a material consideration of significant weight, is engaged. It states that planning permission should be granted unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits.
16. The Council's housing land supply position is 4.74 years. Therefore, it is evident that there is a need for housing when considering this shortfall.
17. The provision of two dwellings would make a small contribution towards the areas housing supply. The development would provide jobs, but this would largely be limited to the construction phase. The site is located within a short distance of a range of day-to-day services. Future occupants would be able to reach these on foot and by public transport, providing them with transport choice and not an over-reliance on a car. The proposal would help maintain services and facilities in the local area. These are all factors weighing in the scheme's favour.
18. On the other hand, I have found that the proposal would be harmful to the character and appearance of the area. The Framework makes it clear that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development. It also expects development to add to the quality of the area and be visually attractive as a result of good architecture and layout. Even taking into account the objective to promote the effective use of land, including small and brownfield sites, and to significantly boost the supply of housing and the Council's housing land supply position, the conflict between the proposal and the most important policies in the development plan should be given very significant weight in this appeal. Therefore, the adverse effects of the proposal would significantly and demonstrably outweigh its benefits.
19. Consequently, the presumption in favour of sustainable development does not apply and I have no reason to take a decision other than in accordance with the development plan.

Conclusion

20. For the reasons set out above the appeal does not succeed.

B Thandi

INSPECTOR