



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 25 June 2024

by Rebecca McAndrew, BA Hons, MSc, PG Dip Urban Design, MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 11 July 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/W0340/D/24/3342506

24 Bowfell Close, Tilehurst, Reading RG31 6QR

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Jamie Sawyer against the decision of West Berkshire Council.
 - The application Ref is 23/01846/HOUSE.
 - The development proposed is boundary works and a vehicle hard standing.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matters

2. The Council refers to Policy CS19 of West Berkshire Core Strategy (2006-2026) Development Plan Document (2012) (CS) in their reason for refusal. This relates to the Historic Environment and Landscape Character. Given that the appeal site is located in a predominantly mid-20th century residential area, this policy is not relevant to the proposal.
3. The Council also refers to the Area Delivery Plan Policy 1 (ADPP1) of the CS in their reason for refusal. This relates to strategic spatial planning, rather than householder development. I have therefore given them very little weight in my decision.
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Main Issue

5. The main issue is the effect on the character and appearance of the site and area.

Reasons

6. The appeal site occupies a corner plot on the junction of Bowfell Close and Fairford Road. Fairford Road is an attractive main route through the area. It is characterised by a mixture of detached and semi-detached homes, with grass verges and trees lining the highway.
7. Policies CS14 and CS18 of the CS require high quality and sustainable design that respects the character and appearance of an area and protects green infrastructure. Paragraph 136 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2023) ('the framework') states, 'Trees make an important contribution to the

character and quality of urban environments and can also help mitigate and adapt to climate change'. It goes on to advise that existing trees should be retained wherever possible.

8. The proposed vehicular access would be from Fairford Road, across a grass verge into the appellant's front garden. It would necessitate the removal of a semi-mature Turkish Hazel tree from the public realm, which makes an important contribution to the local environment. The loss of this tree would unacceptably erode the pleasant character and quality of the streetscene.
9. I agree with the Council's assertion that there would not be adequate space to plant a replacement tree in the area of grass verge on Fairford Road, from which the existing tree would be removed. The appellant suggests a replacement could be planted around the corner in Bowfell Road. However, the tree would be set away from the avenue of trees on Fairford Road so would have a lower amenity value than the existing tree. Indeed, given that the existing tree is a semi-mature specimen, any replacement tree would make significantly less contribution to the local environment than the current situation.
10. In view of the above, the proposal would unduly harm the character and appearance of the site and area and would consequently conflict with Policies CS14 and CS18 of the CS and Paragraph 136 of the framework.

Other Matters

11. I have considered a number of matters raised by the appellant in support of his proposal. I recognise that the appellant considers that an existing garage within the site is not fit for purpose and that the existing drive poses accessibility issues. I acknowledge that the proposal would secure off-street parking in an area which experiences high levels of on-street parking. The appellant also states that the current parking provision on the appeal site does not meet the Council's Parking Standards. The appellant advises that he would be willing to pay for a replacement tree.
12. None of these matters, individually or collectively, would justify the removal of this street tree or outweigh the harm that I have identified to the character and appearance of the area.

Conclusion

13. For the reasons given, the appeal is dismissed.

Rebecca McAndrew

INSPECTOR