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## Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 12 November 2024

**by Hannah Guest BSc (Hons) MA MRTPI**

**an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State**

**Decision date: 26 November 2024**

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**Appeal Ref: APP/J0350/W/24/3340935**

**132 Weekes Drive, Slough SL1 2YP**

- 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 Mr Bahia against the decision of Slough Borough Council.
  - The application Ref is P/20126/001.
  - The development proposed is erection of proposed 1-bed end-of-terrace dwelling, including 6 solar panels and EV charger.
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### Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

### Preliminary Matters

2. As part of the appeal, the appellant has submitted amended plans<sup>1</sup>, which seek to address the Council's reasons for refusal by increasing the width of the proposed dwelling and amending the internal layout and positioning of the windows, to increase the amount of internal space. Although the proposed amendments would not fundamentally change the proposal, accepting amendments such as these at appeal stage could deprive parties of the opportunity to comment. In particular, the occupants of the neighbouring property, No. 134 Weekes Drive. Thus, in this case, taking the amended plans into account could prejudice other parties' interests. I shall therefore determine the appeal on the basis of the plans which were before the Council when it made its decision.

### Main Issues

3. The main issues in this appeal are:
  - whether the proposal would provide adequate living conditions for future occupants, with particular regard to the amount of internal space;
  - the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area; and
  - whether the appeal site is a suitable location for the proposal with regards to the Council's spatial strategy for the area and the type of housing that would be delivered.

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<sup>1</sup> Drawings Nos: 01, 03, 04 and 06. All drawings dated 15/02/24.

## Reasons

### *Living conditions*

4. The floor plans<sup>2</sup> for the proposed 1-bedroom, 2-person dwelling state the floor area would be 56.54 m<sup>2</sup>. This would not meet the minimum gross internal floor area for a 1-bedroom, 2-person dwelling set out in Table 1 of the technical housing standards - nationally described space standard, which is 58 m<sup>2</sup> for a 2-storey dwelling, plus 1.5 m<sup>2</sup> of built-in storage. The failure of the proposal to meet this standard has not been disputed by the appellant.
5. The technical housing standards - nationally described space standard has been put in place to ensure adequate living space, including storage space, is provided for future occupants. The proposal would therefore not provide adequate living conditions for future occupants in this regard.

### *Character and appearance*

6. Weekes Drive consists of terraced houses and residential blocks of flats, set back from the highway. The houses and blocks of flats have a consistent style and use similar materials. They have simple forms and traditional pitched roofs. The frontages of the houses are mostly laid to hardstanding for parking, whereas the frontages of the blocks of flats are lawned with some trees, which adds some greenery to the street scene.
7. The terraced houses are laid out in distinct pairs, each pair set slightly behind the pair before, following the alignment of the highway. This is echoed in the blocks of flats opposite which are also staggered to take account of the alignment of the highway.
8. Every house has an attached garage projecting from the front elevation and, as a result, the front doors of the houses are positioned on a flank elevation behind the garages rather than on the front of the house. The garages of each pair of houses adjoin one another, which emphasises the paired arrangement. The houses also have a consistent pattern of fenestration.
9. The regularity between the houses and their arrangement creates uniformity and rhythm along this section of Weekes Drive. The character and appearance of the area is therefore cohesive and consistent. Despite the terraced form of the houses and reasonably wide residential blocks, their set-back from the highway also creates a sense of spaciousness.
10. The appeal property is located at the end of a long terrace of houses. The appeal site currently forming part of the appeal property's frontage and rear garden. There is a moderate sized gap between the appeal property and its unattached neighbour, which is part of another short terrace of houses. The gap provides a pleasant break in the built form and allows views of mature trees located on parkland to the rear of the properties. It adds both to the sense of spaciousness and the greenery in the street-scene.
11. The proposed dwelling would be attached to the appeal property, extending the existing row of terraced houses, and partially filling the gap between the appeal property and its unattached neighbour. It would be significantly

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<sup>2</sup> Drawing No. 04, dated 09/11/23.

narrower than the other houses and its front elevation would be flush with the front elevation of the appeal property.

12. This would disrupt the staggered arrangement and rhythm of the terraced houses and would unbalance the appeal property and its attached neighbour by adding a third, much narrower dwelling to the group. While the proposed front windows would broadly reflect the existing pattern of fenestration, the three smaller windows and a reduction in space between the windows would add to the noticeable differences between the proposed dwelling and the other houses in the terrace. As would the absence of a garage and the front door being positioned on the front elevation.
13. Overall, despite using matching materials and having the same form and height as the appeal property, the proposed dwelling, by virtue of its width, scale, positioning, and features, would appear incongruous in the street scene. This would significantly harm the consistent and cohesive character and appearance of the area, in particular the terrace of dwellings it would form part of. Furthermore, the proposed dwelling would partially fill the gap between the terraces, which would erode the sense of spaciousness and the amount of greenery in the street scene. Albeit the resulting harm in this regard would be more limited and localised.
14. The appellant's statement of case and the Design and Access Statement submitted with the application both refer to No.11a Summerlea, as having a similar design approach to the proposal. However, I saw on my visit that the context and design of No. 11a Summerlea is quite different to the appeal proposal. The terrace of houses that No. 11a Summerlea forms part of, does not have the same degree of uniformity in its staggered arrangement as the terrace of houses that the proposed dwelling would form part of. Moreover, I saw on my visit that No. 11a Summerlea is a comparable width to the other houses in the terrace and has a more consistent pattern of fenestration. This example is therefore not comparable to the appeal proposal, and I afford it limited weight in my decision.
15. Accordingly, for the reasons above, the proposal would result in significant harm to the character and appearance of the area. It would therefore conflict with Core Policies 1 and 8 of the Slough Local Development Framework Core Strategy 2006-2016 Development Plan Document (2008) (Core Strategy) and Policies EN1 and H13 of the Local Plan for Slough (2004) (Local Plan). These seek to ensure that all development is of a high-quality design, which respects its location and surroundings.

#### *Location*

16. The appeal site is located outside of Slough town centre, where Core Policy 4 of the Core Strategy supports residential development that is predominantly family housing.
17. I understand that the proposal at 56.54 m<sup>2</sup> would not meet the definition of family housing set out in the Core Strategy. Thus, it would not prioritise the delivery of family housing as sought by Core Policy 4 of the Core Strategy. However, I note that the Council does not currently have a five-year supply of deliverable housing sites, which indicates that there is a general need for additional housing in the Borough. Core Policy 4 of the Core Strategy does not require all new housing outside the town centre to be family housing, rather it

supports residential development that is mostly family housing. Given this, and that the proposal is for a single dwelling, it would not result in a significant conflict with the aims of this policy. Therefore, in this case, the appeal site would be an appropriate location for the appeal proposal.

### **Other Matters**

18. In terms of benefits, the proposal would deliver a new dwelling. The latest housing figures show a supply of 2.2 years for the Borough, which is an acute shortfall. The provision of any additional housing therefore carries significant weight. Nonetheless, the single dwelling in this case would only make a modest contribution towards the Borough's housing supply.
19. The proposal would have modest environmental, social, and economic benefits resulting from the proposed dwelling being well-insulated, and the spending associated with its construction and subsequent occupation.
20. The appellant's statement of case identifies extra space and a more efficient internal layout as a benefit to the appellant arising from the proposal. While it is not entirely clear how the new dwelling would deliver these benefits to the appellant, they would also be modest.

### **Planning Balance and Conclusion**

21. Given the shortfall in housing supply, paragraph 11d) of the Framework falls to be considered. This means granting planning permission unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against policies in the Framework taken as a whole.
22. I have found that the appeal site would be an appropriate location for the development proposal. Nevertheless, this would neither outweigh nor justify the significant harm to the character and appearance of the area and the living conditions of future occupants. The proposal would therefore conflict with the development plan, read as a whole.
23. The Framework seeks to create high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings, and places by, among other things, ensuring developments are visually attractive and sympathetic to local character, and by creating places with a high standard of amenity for future users. This is considered fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve, and paragraph 139 of the Framework advises that development that is not well designed should be refused. Core Policies 1 and 8 of the Core Strategy and Policies EN1 and H13 of the Local Plan are broadly consistent with this.
24. Accordingly, when assessed against the policies in the Framework, taken as a whole, the significant adverse impacts of the proposal would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the modest benefits.
25. For the reasons above, having had regard to all relevant material considerations, it has not been demonstrated that there are any of sufficient weight to indicate that a decision should be taken otherwise than in accordance with it. The appeal is therefore dismissed.

*Hannah Guest*     INSPECTOR