



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 17 December 2024

by Martin Andrews MA(Planning) BSc(Econ) DipTP & DipTP(Dist) MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 06 January 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/H1705/D/24/3350265

1 Newbury Road, Whitchurch, Hampshire RG28 7DY

- 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 Gary Barber against the decision of Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council.
 - The application Ref. is 23/01821/HSE.
 - The development proposed is new parking to the rear garden involving excavation and the building of a retaining wall (part retrospective).
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the Whitchurch Conservation Area and the host dwelling, a non-designated heritage asset.

Reasons

3. The appeal property is a semi-detached house of traditional design at the junction of Newbury Road with Oakland Road. The rear garden is at a higher level than Oakland Road and a boundary wall and hedge have been removed and an area of soil removed for the purpose of creating parking space for two cars. Google street imagery dated July 2021 shows what appeared to be a stone wall surmounted by hedges and trees that have been allowed to grow to a significant height which achieved almost full enclosure of the rear garden, with only a narrow gap adjoining the house.
4. From the evidence in this appeal, I cannot be sure whether this was still the situation at the commencement of the development. Be that as it may, it is material to my consideration of the appeal that No. 1 and adjoining properties are identified as notable buildings in the Conservation Area Appraisal Map. In addition, the site lies within 'Character Area 1' which is characterised by a strong sense of enclosure as a result of a consistent boundary line close to the road.
5. The section of wall removed is part that boundary line and from my visit I was able to observe that its removal and the resulting openness of the rear curtilage to Oakland Road is demonstrably detrimental to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. The grounds of appeal refer to a 'concrete' boundary wall, but because of a combination of its age, roughcast

surface and clinging vegetation the wall was (and still is insofar as it remains along Oakland Road) a boundary in keeping with the rustic character of the locality. I therefore disagree with the appellant that the demolished section had no visual merit.

6. I acknowledge that with the cessation of excavation and construction the site presently has a particularly poor appearance from the junction and Oakland Road. If completed in accordance with the now submitted plans this would indisputably improve. However, the perception of enclosure along the rear garden boundary would no longer remain. And the retaining walls, even if formed using gabion baskets as suggested, together with the hard surfaced parking area permanently open to the road, would be an 'engineering operation' that would be out of keeping with the character and appearance of the conservation area. I also consider that the host dwelling
7. As such, I find that these aspects of the conservation area would not be preserved and that there would be conflict with the Council's design and conservation guidance; Policies EM10 & EM11 of the Basingstoke and Deane Local Plan 2011-2029, and Policy GD1 of the Whitchurch Neighbourhood Development Plan 2014-2029.
8. The appellant refers to an absence of any planning balance in the Officer's Report and I am able to consider this with regard to paragraph 215 of the National Planning Policy Framework December 2024 ('the Framework'). In the language of the Framework the proposal would lead to '*less than substantial harm*' to the conservation area, and this paragraph of the Framework requires that this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.
9. Clearly, off-road parking has advantages over roadside parking - in this case because of the local shortage of on-road provision, the potential hazards of on-road parking manoeuvres and the increased accessibility it would provide to occupiers of No. 1 Newbury Road, who at some future point could include residents with disabilities.
10. However, although I note that the Local Highway Authority had no objection to the application, the proposal would result in the vehicles either reversing out of the spaces or reversing into them. On a site with minimal sightlines and in a position close to the junction with its limited visibility, I consider this to be a hazard that affords moderate weight in the planning balance.
11. Of greater weight is that although there is the potential for the measures of mitigation set out in the grounds of appeal and the new diagram of the scheme, the combination of the loss of enclosure to the street scene and the introduction of 'a parking courtyard' necessarily of an 'engineered' construction because of the land levels, would be such as to have a harmful effect. With its rectilinear form because of the retaining walls, the development would go against the grain of the informal and rural character of this part of the conservation area.
12. The suggestion that the impact would be acceptable because it would be 'localised' is not consistent with local and national policy and guidance, although I accept that a small-scale development, as is the case here, will have a proportionately less effect on the significance of the designated heritage asset than would larger schemes. Nonetheless, overall there would be harm to the significance of the conservation area and with reference to paragraph 216

of the Framework also to the significance of No. 1 Newbury Road as a non-designated heritage asset. Taking these points together I am satisfied that the public benefits do not outweigh the harm caused.

13. For the reasons explained above and having had regard to all other matters raised, the appeal fails.

Martin Andrews

INSPECTOR