
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 21 July 2025

by **L Francis BA (Hons) MA MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 1 October 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/Q3630/W/25/3360991

2 Kitsmead Lane, Longcross, Surrey KT16 0EF

- 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 Nick Robinson against the decision of Runnymede Borough Council.
 - The application Ref is RU.24/0004.
 - The development proposed is the demolition of existing home office and outbuildings and construction of a detached house.
-

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. A site plan showing an amendment to the proposed site access was submitted before the Council determined the application and the drawing number was listed on the decision letter, as well as the drawing number of the originally submitted plan. It is clear to me however from the Council's evidence that the planning application was not determined on the basis of the amended access.
3. The Council indicates that the amendments to the access would require an updated arboricultural statement as the proposal would require the removal of some protected trees.
4. The appellant requests that I consider the amended scheme should I not find the original proposal acceptable. As set out in the planning appeals procedural guide, it is not the role of the appeal process to evolve a development scheme. What is considered at appeal should be essentially the same scheme that was considered by the local planning authority. I proceed to determine the appeal on the basis upon which the Council made its decision, given that the changes in the revised plan show a different location for the access which would have associated implications for protected trees and ecology.
5. The appeal is accompanied by a planning obligation to secure a payment towards the Suitable Accessible Natural Greenspace (SANG) and the Strategic Access Management and Monitoring measures (SAMM) to which I have had regard in my decision.

Main Issues

6. The main issues are the effect of the proposal on:
 - highway safety with particular regard to the intensification of use of the existing access; and,

- the integrity of the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (SPA).

Reasons

Highway Safety

7. The appeal site comprises a semi-detached house with several outbuildings, with a single vehicular access from Kitsmead Lane. The proposal includes the removal of the outbuildings and their replacement with a 2-storey detached dwelling. The scheme would have sufficient space on site for 2 parking spaces per dwelling, along with space for turning to allow egress in forward gear.
8. Kitsmead Lane is a single carriageway road with a speed limit of 40mph. It is a rural road with few, sporadic vehicular crossovers leading from it. When travelling northbound from Longcross Road, the dwelling's vehicular access is located soon after a bend in the road. The existing vehicular access to the appeal site is flanked on either side by a high evergreen hedge which has the effect of severely restricting visibility in both directions.
9. It would be a reasonable assumption therefore that vehicles exiting the site would potentially emerge into the path of an oncoming vehicle. Approach speeds (85th percentile) were found to be 40.7mph northbound and 44.7mph southbound and I do not consider that the existing arrangement would allow sufficient distance to brake sufficiently following sight of a vehicle coming out of the appeal site to safely avoid collision.
10. Data provided by the appellant shows on average there are 1.8 arrival trips and 1.8 departure trips per weekday associated with the business operations from the home office at the site, in addition to trips associated with the existing dwelling. I note the representations of the interested party in regard to the data provided, but there is no compelling evidence before me which would lead me to doubt the figures provided. According to the industry standard trip-generation database, 2 houses would be expected to generate 5 arrivals and 5 departures daily. I accept that given the existing pattern of trips to and from the appeal site, the potential increase in vehicular movements arising from the proposal would be small.
11. Nevertheless, the proposal would introduce an additional dwelling which would rely on the existing vehicular access. Whilst the access arrangement appears to be historic, it would not be of an appropriate standard for a new dwelling and it would perpetuate and intensify an arrangement that would be harmful to highway safety. Whilst accepting that the increase in vehicular movements would be small, highway safety would not be maintained by using the existing access.
12. Whilst there would be potential to cut or modify the hedges, this is not a matter before me in relation to the existing access. There is no certainty that hedge cutting would improve the visibility splays sufficiently to create an access that would not be harmful to highway safety. As such, it would not be appropriate to impose a condition to this effect.
13. Based on the proposal before me therefore, even though there would be a small increase in the day-to-day trips associated with the site, the proposed access arrangements would be harmful to highway safety. This would run contrary to Policy SD4 of the Runnymede 2040 Local Plan (adopted 2020) which supports development proposals which maintain or enhance the efficient and safe operation

of the highway network and which take account of the needs of all highway users for safe access, egress and servicing arrangements.

Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (SPA)

14. The site is within the 400m to 5km zone of influence of the SPA. The SPA is designated due to its lowland heath supporting important populations of ground nesting birds including Dartford Warbler, Nightjar and Woodlark. The conservation objectives for the SPA are to ensure that the integrity of the designated site is maintained or restored as appropriate and that the site contributes to achieving the aims of the Wild Birds Directive.
15. The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) (the Habitats Regulations) requires the decision maker to undertake an Appropriate Assessment where there are likely significant effects from the proposal, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects. This responsibility falls to me as the competent authority in the context of this appeal.
16. Natural England advise that new housing within the zone of influence of the SPA may harm the populations of these rare birds. The harm can be caused by disturbance to the birds from walkers, domestic animals frequenting the heathland and other recreational activities. It would be reasonable to conclude that the addition of a single dwelling would contribute to an increase in recreational pressure requiring mitigation. I therefore consider that the effects of the proposed dwelling, both on its own and in combination with other development projects, is such that it is likely to have significant effects on the integrity of the SPA.
17. Policy EE10 and the Thames Basin Heaths SPA Supplementary Planning Document 2021 set out a mitigation framework endorsed by Natural England. For residential development within the 400m to 5km zone, the provision of financial contributions towards the SANG and the SAMM are required. Based on an occupancy calculation, the SAMM contribution would be £1107.75 and the SANG contribution £2258.75.
18. The appellant has provided a completed planning obligation to secure the payment of the contributions prior to implementation. The contributions would be necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms; directly related to the development; and fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the development, in accordance with Regulation 122 of the Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations. As such, the contribution toward the mitigation schemes would count as mitigation toward maintaining the integrity of the SPA.
19. I am therefore satisfied that with the funding for the SANG and SAMM in place, the proposal would not have an adverse effect on the SPA. The proposal would therefore comply with the Habitats Regulations.

Other Matters

20. The Council is satisfied with matters including the dwelling's floorspace and layout, their effect upon the living conditions of neighbouring occupiers, refuse and cycle storage and flood risk. I do not have substantive evidence to contradict the conclusions of the Council in these matters, so I see no reason to disagree. Nevertheless, the absence of harm means these are neutral considerations in my determination of the appeal.

Planning Balance and Conclusion

21. The proposal would provide an additional family sized dwelling which would contribute to the Council's housing stock would support the Government's aim of significantly boosting the supply of homes. However, the net increase of a single dwelling would provide a limited contribution in this context and I attach limited weight to this benefit. There would be temporary and ongoing socio-economic benefits from the development through construction and the future residents' use of local shops and services, but given the scale of development, those benefits would be very limited. The scheme would offer small biodiversity mitigation and enhancement measures which would have been secured by condition had the appeal been allowed.
22. I have found that the proposal would be acceptable in terms of its effect on the SPA and would comply with the Habitats Regulations. However, this would be outweighed by the harm I have found to highway safety arising from the proposed access arrangements.
23. As such the proposal would be contrary to the development plan read as a whole. No material considerations have been shown to have sufficient weight to indicate that a decision should be taken otherwise than in accordance with it. The appeal should therefore be dismissed.

L Francis

INSPECTOR