



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 8 October 2025

by K Reeves BA (Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 24 October 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/R0335/W/25/3365558

27 Wentworth Way, Ascot SL5 8HH

- 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 B Smith against the decision of Bracknell Forest Borough Council.
 - The application Ref is 23/00814/FUL.
 - The development proposed is erection of one x 3 bedroom house, following partial demolition of existing house. Extensions to existing house.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are the effect of the proposed development on:
 - the character and appearance of the area; and
 - the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (SPA).

Reasons

Character and appearance

3. The appeal site is located within a residential street defined by a coherent pattern of semi-detached dwellings, comprising both single and two-storey forms. Despite some variation in height, the prevailing typology is that of paired dwellings with consistent spacing, massing, and architectural symmetry. These are qualities that contribute to the visual rhythm and coherence of the streetscene.
4. The proposed dwelling would adjoin the flank elevation of an existing two-storey semi-detached property, thereby converting the pair into a short terrace of three. While the design attempts to replicate elements of the host dwelling, the resulting composition would undermine the balanced form of the original pair and introduce a built form that is uncharacteristic of the immediate context. This would result in a discordant form of development that fails to respect the established character and appearance of the area.
5. The appellant has drawn my attention to a row of terraced dwellings elsewhere along the street. However, these are located in a visually detached position on the street and are not perceived within the same context as the appeal site. More significantly, the terraced dwellings themselves deviate from the prevailing pattern of semi-detached development and cannot be considered a relevant or appropriate comparator.

6. Likewise, the presence of side extensions on semi-detached properties does not justify the introduction of a new two-storey dwelling. These additions are typically modest, devoid of features suggesting an independent residential unit, and preserve the appearance of a single unified dwelling. In contrast, the proposed development would introduce a distinct third unit, disrupting the established rhythm, symmetry, and architectural harmony of the existing pair.
7. With regard to the proposed hardstanding to the front of the property, this would not appear out of keeping with the street scene, where similar treatments are evident and planting is limited. Accordingly, that part of the proposal would not conflict with Policy W3 of the Winkfield Parish Neighbourhood Plan 2022 – 2037 (NP), which seeks to ensure parking areas are integrated in a manner that does not harm local character.
8. Having regard to the above, although I have found the hardstanding acceptable, the dwelling itself would cause unacceptable harm to the character and appearance of the area. As such, the proposal would conflict with Policies LP28 and LP50 of the Bracknell Forest Local Plan 2020 – 2037 (LP) and Policies W1 and W2 of the NP, all of which seek, in part, high-quality design that positively contributes to placemaking and responds appropriately to local context.

Thames Basin Heaths SPA

9. The appeal site falls within the 5km zone of influence of the Thames Basin Heaths SPA, a network of heathland habitats designated for their ecological importance in supporting internationally protected bird species, including the Woodlark, Nightjar, and Dartford Warbler. A Habitats Regulations Assessment undertaken by the Council, and endorsed by Natural England, confirms that any net increase in residential units within this zone is likely to have a significant adverse effect on the integrity of the SPA, either individually or cumulatively, due to increased recreational pressure and disturbance to ground-nesting birds.
10. In view of this, the proposed additional dwelling is considered likely to result in harm to the SPA. Accordingly, appropriate avoidance and mitigation measures are required. The Council's Thames Basin Heaths SPA Supplementary Planning Document sets out a joint strategy whereby financial contributions are directed towards the provision of Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspaces and Strategic Access Management and Monitoring measures, both designed to divert recreational activity away from the SPA and manage its ecological impacts.
11. The appellant has not contested the need for such mitigation and has expressed a willingness to enter into a legal agreement to secure the necessary contributions. However, no draft unilateral undertaking has been submitted. Consequently, there is no mechanism before me to adequately secure the Council's obligations in delivering the required mitigation. In the absence of a completed and enforceable legal agreement, there remains no certainty that the necessary mitigation would be implemented or maintained.
12. Whilst the appellant has proposed a negatively worded condition to secure the legal agreement post-decision, such an approach would not guarantee that mitigation is in place at the time of determination. As a result, the proposal fails to demonstrate compliance with the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended), and planning permission should not be granted.

13. Notwithstanding this, given the unacceptable impacts identified elsewhere in this decision, specifically in relation to character and appearance, it is not necessary to consider the SPA-related harm or mitigation further in the context of the competent authority's assessment. Moreover, the provision of a completed and enforceable legal agreement would not have altered the outcome of the appeal.
14. For these reasons, the proposed development would result in an unacceptable adverse effect on the integrity of the SPA and would conflict with Policy LP32 of the LP and Policy NRM6 of the South East Plan (May 2009), both of which require development to avoid and mitigate harm to the Thames Basin Heaths SPA in accordance with the Habitat Regulations.

Other Matter

15. I acknowledge that the Council's Committee determined the planning application contrary to the recommendation of its officers. However, this is not a determinative factor in my assessment of the appeal and does not alter my judgement regarding the acceptability of the scheme.

Planning Balance

16. The Council accepts it cannot demonstrate a five-year housing land supply. In these circumstances, Paragraph 11(d)(i) of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) states that permission should be granted unless the application of policies in the Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provide a strong reason for refusing the development, having regard to Footnote 7. This includes areas designated as habitats sites, including SACs and SPAs.
17. The harm to the designated habitats site, for which there is no suitable mechanism to secure financial contributions for the mitigation of recreational impacts contributed to by the proposed development, means that the habitats and biodiversity policies in the Framework provide a strong reason for refusing the development proposed. Paragraph 11(d)(ii) is not therefore engaged.
18. The proposal would deliver a single dwelling with reasonable access to local services, offering a modest contribution to the Council's housing shortfall. The Framework emphasises the Government's objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes and recognises the valuable role small sites can play in meeting local housing needs. However, given the limited scale of development, the impact on overall housing supply would be negligible and attracts minimal weight. Short-term construction employment and minor post-occupation benefits are acknowledged but similarly carry limited weight.
19. Set against these benefits is the unacceptable harm the proposal would cause to the character and appearance of the area and the designated habitats site. Whilst elements of the scheme may align with certain policies within the Local Plan, the overall impact results in conflict with the development plan when read as a whole. The Framework emphasises the importance of development being sympathetic to local character, including the surrounding built form, and seeks to protect and enhance biodiversity. As the policies with which the proposal conflicts are consistent with the Framework, I attribute significant weight to the harm identified and the associated policy conflict.

20. Taking all matters into account, the unacceptable harm that would arise to the character and appearance of the area and the designated habitats site outweighs the limited benefits of the proposal.

Conclusion

21. For the reasons given above, the proposed development would conflict with the development plan and the material considerations do not indicate that the appeal should be decided other than in accordance with it. Accordingly, the appeal should be dismissed.

K Reeves

INSPECTOR