

Compton Pins Ref 2215794	20 Manor Cres. Compton, RG20 6NR	Part demolition of the existing dwelling (single storey element) and construction of new dwelling.	Dele. Refusal	Dismissed 24.06.2014
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Procedural Matter

The Government's Planning Practice Guidance was issued on 6 March 2014. The Inspector took this guidance into account in reaching his decision.

Main Issues

The main issues are:

- the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the area, and
- whether the proposal makes adequate provision for any additional need for infrastructure, services and facilities arising from the occupation of the development.

Reasons

Character and appearance

The appeal site is located within the settlement boundary of Compton, where new development is acceptable in principle. The site is located within a residential estate that is characterised by semi-detached houses which are generally symmetrical in design and conform to well-defined building lines.

The regular spacing between the buildings provides a distinctive rhythm to the pattern of development and allows views into the space behind the dwellings. Consequently, this spacing forms an important element of the streetscene. The overall uniformity of the dwellings and the spaces between them provide this estate with a cohesive and distinctive character and appearance.

The proposed development would introduce a substantial single-storey structure to the rear of the appeal property. The building has been designed as a separate dwellinghouse and would appear as such in the streetscene. It would therefore not appear as a subservient building to the existing dwelling. Moreover, the proposed building is of a very different form to the symmetrical semi-detached houses from which the cohesive and distinctive character of this estate is derived. The introduction of the proposed single-storey dwellinghouse would therefore constitute an incongruous addition to the streetscene, and one which would not be in keeping with the distinctive character of the estate.

The Inspector accepted that the proposed dwellinghouse would not completely infill the gap between the appeal property and its neighbour, and that it would generally be viewed against the backdrop of the houses in Gordon Crescent to the rear. Furthermore, as a single-storey structure within the existing settlement boundary of Compton, the proposed development would not harm the landscape value of the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. However, because of its size, height and overt appearance as a separate dwelling, it would nonetheless disrupt the regular spacing of these buildings and would fail to retain a sense of space between the dwellings. This would upset the distinctive rhythm to the pattern of development that is itself an important element of the streetscene and thus would be harmful to it.

The proposed dwellinghouse would also sit behind the well-defined building line established by the existing houses. It would occupy a significant proportion of the plot, with only limited space to the sides and rear of the dwelling. Moreover, because that plot would be smaller than the typical plot sizes of other buildings in the estate, the proposed house would appear cramped and out of keeping with the prevailing pattern of development.

The Inspector recognised that the design of the proposed dwellinghouse seeks to address the Inspector's comments in relation to an earlier proposal for a two-storey dwelling that was dismissed on appeal (APP/W0340/A/13/2193272). The resultant dwelling is a very different design to that found to be unacceptable by the previous Inspector, notably in terms of its height and horizontal emphasis. The corollary is that the proposal raises a set of new design issues which, although for different reasons, result in a proposal that is also harmful to the character and appearance of this estate.

The appellant has referred to a number of developments in the vicinity of the appeal site which, it is contended, demonstrate that developments similar to that now proposed have been found to be acceptable and/or have resulted in the infilling of spaces between dwellings on this estate. However, it is evident from the photographs provided that the developments referred to are materially different to that now proposed, either in terms of their form or the context in which they are sited. Moreover, the Inspector had been provided with no details about the circumstances that led to planning permission being granted for these developments. Accordingly he attached little weight to them and did not consider that they provide justification for the development now proposed.

The proposed development includes an access across the open grassed area in front of the appeal site, leading to parking spaces for two cars and a turning facility in association with the existing dwelling. This would address the comments made by the previous Inspector in relation to the number of car parking spaces provided and the Inspector noted that the Council's Highways Officer did not object to the proposal. However, the grassed area in front of the appeal site contributes to the generally open and spacious appearance of the estate and the addition of a further hard surface running across this area would be harmful to that appearance. In this context, the visual impact of the additional hard surfacing proposed as part of this development is an entirely separate consideration to any legal right of way over the grassed area held by the appellant.

The Inspector concluded that the proposed development would unacceptably harm the character and appearance of the area. The proposed development would therefore be contrary to Policies ADPP1, ADPP5, CS14 and CS19 of the West Berkshire Core Strategy 2006-2026 and saved Policy HSG1 of the West Berkshire District Local Plan 1991-2006. The proposed development would also not accord with the Council's Supplementary Planning Document SPD: Quality Design, Part 2 Residential Development and the Compton Village Design Statement. These policies and documents require, amongst other things, a high standard of design that respects and enhances the character and appearance of the area and contribute positively to local distinctiveness and a sense of place. In relation to new housing development, these policies require that regard is had to the existing residential nature of the area surrounding the site and the need to protect open space or amenity features which give character not only to the site but to the surrounding area.

Infrastructure

The appellant provided a signed Unilateral Undertaking to provide the contributions sought by the Council in relation to the provision of infrastructure and services arising from the proposed development. The Council has confirmed that the Unilateral Undertaking is acceptable. The Inspector was satisfied that the Unilateral Undertaking sought is necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms, is directly related to the proposed development and is fairly and reasonably related to it in scale and kind. He concluded that the appeal proposal makes adequate provision for the additional need for infrastructure, services and facilities arising from the occupation of the development. The proposed development would therefore accord with Policy CS5

of the West Berkshire Core Strategy 2006-2026 and West Berkshire District Council's adopted SPD – Delivering Investment from Sustainable Development 2013.

Conclusion

The Inspector acknowledged that the proposed development would provide an additional and energy efficient dwelling within the settlement boundary of Compton. However, the limited benefit in this respect would be outweighed by the harm caused to the character and appearance of the area.

Accordingly, he concluded that this appeal should be dismissed.

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