



## Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 20 November 2020

by **R C Shrimplin MA(Cantab) DipArch RIBA FRTPI FCI Arb MCIL**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: **08 January 2021.**

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### **Appeal Reference: APP/K2230/D/20/3248991**

### **Land at 28 Hartshill Road, Northfleet, Gravesend DA11 7DY**

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant planning permission.
  - The appeal is made by Miss H Begum against the decision of Gravesham Borough Council.
  - The application (reference 20191137, dated 19 March 2020) was refused by notice dated 18 December 2019.
  - The development proposed is described in the application form as "new dropped kerb and access over grass area at front of house".
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### **Decision**

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for "new dropped kerb and access over grass area at front of house", at 28 Hartshill Road, Northfleet, Gravesend DA11 7DY, in accordance with the terms of the application (reference 20191137, dated 19 March 2020), subject to the following conditions.
  1. The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this decision.
  2. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved drawings (subject to condition 3, below):
    - unnumbered Ordnance Survey site plan (1:1250);
    - unnumbered Ordnance Survey existing block plan (1:200);
    - unnumbered Ordnance Survey proposed block plan (1:200);
    - unnumbered proposal drawing entitled "PLANS" (1:50 and 1:100).
  3. Prior to the approved hardstanding being brought into use, details of the proposed crossover width shall have been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

### **Main issues**

2. The first main issue to be determined in this appeal is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the surroundings. The second is whether the proposed car parking space would be of sufficient size to prevent danger or inconvenience to others.

## Reasons

3. The appeal site lies within an extensive residential area of Gravesend that is characterised by terraced and semi-detached houses of conventional design. Near to the appeal site there is a care home (the Mayflower Care Home) and an extensive cemetery. The area is open in character, with wide grassy verges in front of the residential properties. There is a significant amount of on-street parking in the area, sometimes on the footpaths or verges, though some houses have crossovers (whether authorised or not).
4. The house at 28 Hartshill Road is a semi-detached house set behind a wide grass verge between the front boundary of the plot and the footpath adjacent to the carriageway. Most of the front garden of the house has been paved, with brick paviours, leaving a smaller area of grass, although there is no formal crossover. A pattern in the brick paviours delineates a path to the front door of the house, alongside a parking area. The path continues through the grass verge to meet the highway footpath.
5. It is now proposed that the paved parking area should be retained, with a new crossover.
6. The 'National Planning Policy Framework' (which was revised in February 2019) emphasises the aim of "achieving well designed places" in the broadest sense (notably at Section 12), while making effective use of land and encouraging economic activity. It goes on also to emphasise the need to protect and enhance biodiversity, in principle, with the aim of "conserving and enhancing the natural environment" (at Section 15).
7. An emphasis on the importance of good design is also to be found in the Development Plan, notably at Policy CS19 of the 'Gravesend Local Plan Core Strategy' (adopted in September 2014), which identifies the Council's aim to "conserve and enhance the character of the local built, historic and natural environment", among other things. Policy CS12, which is entitled "Green Infrastructure", has the broad aim of protecting "overall landscape character" as well as having more specific biodiversity objectives.
8. Kent County Council publishes two supplementary planning guidance documents that are also relevant, although they do not have the same weight as the Development Plan. Kent County Council's 'Vehicle Crossing: Guidance and Self-Assessment' provides that a parking space should have a length of 4.8 metres between the front of a house and the public footway. The 'Supplementary Planning Guidance SPG/4 Kent Vehicle Parking Standards' document (dated July 2006) advises that the length of an average car is about 4.4 metres and refers to an historic standard for a parking bay of 4.8 metres by 2.4 metres, although it also identifies a "preferred" parking bay size for Kent of 5.5 metres by 2.4 metres.
9. The new brick paving creates a rather hard element in the front garden and the new crossover, across the existing grass verge, would increase the area of hard surfacing. Even so, some areas of grass would be retained, though that would be less than the application drawing suggests, in reality. There would be space for more thoughtful planting within the front garden, if the occupiers so desired. Overall, the proposed development would have only a limited visual impact on its surroundings.

10. At the same time, the close cropped grass verge currently makes a minimal contribution to biodiversity whereas, for example, the nearby extensive open space at the cemetery offers much greater potential for biodiversity management.
11. Thus, the proposed development would have only a limited effect on the character and appearance of the surroundings.
12. In the submissions, dimensions of 4.65 or 4.66 metres are given for the depth of the parking bay, which is less than the depth indicated in Kent County Council guidance. Even so, many modern cars would fit comfortably within the depth provided, while a wide grass verge separates the front boundary of the plot from the highway footpath. I have noted that "the Council's Highways Development Management Officer has raised no objections to the proposal", which is an eminently sensible approach, in my view, in the particular circumstances of this site. The scheme would not have a detrimental effect on highway or pedestrian safety or convenience in reality, while the detailed construction of the crossover would require the agreement of the Highway Authority.
13. Evidently, the appeal site lies within an established urban area, which is "sustainable" in planning terms, and the proposal would improve the facilities at 28 Hartshill Road. I have concluded that the scheme would not have a significantly harmful effect on the character or appearance of the surroundings or on biodiversity and I am persuaded that the parking area is of sufficient size to avoid causing any harm to passers-by. Hence, I have concluded that the project would not be in conflict with the Development Plan, in principle, and I am persuaded that the scheme before me can properly be permitted, subject to conditions. Although I have considered all the matters that have been raised in the representations I have found nothing to cause me to alter my decision.
14. I have, however, also considered the need for conditions and, in imposing conditions, I have taken account of the conditions suggested by the Council in the usual way (without prejudice to their main arguments in the appeal). I have concluded that conditions are necessary, to define the planning permission.
15. An additional condition is necessary in this case, to enable the width of the crossover to be more carefully defined. The application drawing shows a narrow crossover, whereas the Council's suggested condition proposes that the crossover ought to be constructed to the full width of the hardstanding. Currently, the brick hardstanding includes a pedestrian path and is wider than would be necessary for the crossover. Before the hardstanding can be used, therefore, specific details of the width of the new crossover must be submitted to and approved by the local planning authority.

*Roger C Shrimplin*

INSPECTOR