
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 4 October, 2016

by S. J. Buckingham, BA (Hons) DipTP MSc MRTPI FSA

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government

Decision date: 8th November, 2016

Appeal Ref: APP/H0520/W/16/3152187

2 Mandeville Road, Brampton, Cambridgeshire, PE28 4SB

- 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 Mr. Frank Plater against the decision of Huntingdonshire District Council.
 - The application Ref 16/00257/FUL, dated 8 February 2016, was refused by notice dated 4 April 2016.
 - The development proposed is two two-bedroom houses on the land at the side of 2 Mandeville Road.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The Council has confirmed in its statement of case that it wishes to withdraw its second reason for refusal relating to the effect on highway safety caused by inadequate provision of off-street parking. I have therefore determined the appeal on that basis.
3. The Draft Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036 (2013) has not yet been completed, and its policies may still be subject to change. I am therefore able to accord little weight to its policies.

Main Issue

4. The main issue in this case is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

5. The appeal site is located in an outlying residential part of Brampton. Houses in the area consist of simple, brick-built houses with pitched and gabled roofs, in pairs or short terraces and set behind front gardens. Most enjoy relatively large gardens for their size, which can be glimpsed between the buildings. The garden spaces, grassed verges and other small incidental greens contribute to the open and green character of the area.
 6. The corner plots are particularly generous, and a characteristic feature of the area. Some are used entirely as garden spaces, enclosed by hedges, or, as in the case of the appeal plot, are partly open with an area used for parking.
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7. The host property, no. 2 Mandeville Road, and its pair, no. 4, are both set slightly forward of the typical building line of other houses along that part of the road.
8. The appeal proposal consists of two houses set in the corner garden area of no. 2 which would continue the line of houses along that part of Mandeville Road, and be set forward of the building line of nos. 2 and 4. They would be a small, handed pair in a simple form relating to the prevailing design in the area, each with a small garden either to the rear or flank.
9. The plot is on a corner, and by virtue of that fact and its open nature, is prominent in views along Mandeville Road and Olivia Road. The insertion of a built element into the corner plot would cause the loss of this open space and would form a conspicuous element in an otherwise open part of the area. This effect would be exacerbated as the proposed dwellings would sit significantly forward of the typical building line of this part of Mandeville Road. The development would also create a layout whereby one house presented its flank elevation to Olivia Road, forward of the building line along that road too. The appeal proposal would therefore noticeably diminish the spacious character of the area, and would be an intrusive and harmful element in views of the corner in an area where large open corner plots form a significant element of the character.
10. The houses created would have uncharacteristically small plots with small back and front gardens, which would be at odds with the open character of the area where generous garden spaces are a key feature. While perhaps not small in relation to modest dwellings approved elsewhere in the village or elsewhere, no details of these developments have been put before me. In any case, the appeal dwellings should properly be considered in relation to their context, and their plots would be small in relation to others within the immediate area. The houses would be very closely spaced with the pair of number 2 and 4 with very limited visible separation, thereby creating a terraced effect. The appeal proposal would therefore create an urbanised and cramped form of development in an open and suburban area, which would diminish the openness of the area and thereby have a harmful effect on its character and appearance.
11. I noted the existence of side extensions to houses within the area, but do not consider that they compromise its open character, as they retain gaps between buildings and typically sized front gardens. In any case, this is an application for two new dwellings which has to be considered on its own merits.
12. The landscaping to the front of the appeal dwellings would be modest, and due to the size of the front gardens, dominated by the parking on them. I do not consider that this would mitigate the effect of the appeal proposal in terms of amount of building to be placed on the appeal site and the small plot sizes created thereby.
13. I note the appellant's point that smaller housing is needed within the area, but do not consider that the benefits of provision of two additional dwellings would be sufficient to counteract the harm identified, more so in the light of the council's ability to demonstrate a five year deliverable housing supply. This fact does not therefore cause me to alter my conclusion.

14. By virtue of its harmful effect on the character and appearance of the area, the appeal proposal would therefore conflict with policies EN25 of the Huntingdonshire Local Plan 1995 (the LP) which seeks new development which generally respects the scale, form, materials and design of established buildings in the locality and Policy H32 of the LP which seeks to ensure that sub-division of larger curtilages leads to dwellings and their curtilages which are of a size and form sympathetic to the locality. It would also conflict with Policy HL5 of the Huntingdonshire Local Plan Alteration 2002 which seeks good design and layout in new housing development which respects the townscape and landscape of the wider locality, and with Policy CS1 of the Adopted Core Strategy 2009 which seeks to promote sustainable development following the three criteria set out in the Framework, including the environmental aspects of sustainable development and the aim to preserve and enhance the diversity and distinctiveness of Huntingdonshire's towns villages and landscapes.
15. The proposal also conflicts with advice contained in the Huntingdonshire Design Guide 2007 which seeks to encourage design which sits well within its site and setting, and which makes a positive contribution to the character of the surrounding area.

Other Matters

16. The appellant has provided a signed Unilateral Undertaking in respect of a financial contribution for the provision of wheeled refuse bins. However the appeal proposal is unacceptable for the reasons given above and it is not necessary for me to consider this matter in detail.

Conclusion

17. For the reasons given above, and taking into account matters raised, I conclude therefore that the appeal should be dismissed.

S J Buckingham

INSPECTOR