
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 11 October 2016

by H Porter BA(Hons) PGDip IHBC

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

Decision date: 10 November 2016

Appeal Ref: APP/F0114/W/16/3155769

9, Rotcombe Lane, High Littleton, Bristol BS39 6JP

- 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 Lee Adams against the decision of Bath & North East Somerset Council.
 - The application Ref 16/01641/FUL, dated 4 April 2016, was refused by notice dated 10 June 2016.
 - The development proposed is described as 'erection of new dwelling'.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

3. The appeal site is situated in a late-20th century development on the edge of High Littleton. The area is characterised by the broadly consistent scale and form of houses, as well as by a regular plot rhythm and layout. Small groups of houses are united by a specific design, while end plots tend to be larger, providing a sense of openness at street corners. Overall, the careful spatial planning, generous gardens, and gaps between houses contribute positively to the sense of a verdant and spacious suburban layout.
 4. The proposed development plot is in a prominent position on the corner splay between Rotcombe Lane and Parklands, giving views to rear gardens beyond. Numbers 9 to 19 Rotcombe Lane form a cohesive group of semi-detached pairs, evenly spaced and set back from the pavement edge by front gardens of equal length. Parklands houses are similarly paired and spaced. The rhythm of the houses combined with the generous side garden of 9 Rotcombe Lane (No 9) add to the sense of openness and plot layout that typifies the character and appearance of the area.
 5. The proposed development would introduce a two-storey detached dwelling on the side garden plot of No 9. In terms of materials and detailed design the proposal would broadly fit with the local development. However, the insertion of a detached house at the end of the group of semi-detached pairs would present an uncomfortable and cramped addition. Building across the open corner plot, the appeal scheme would fill the gap that currently separates the Rotcombe Lane and Parklands houses. Infilling into the end-of-street plot
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would diminish the view through to private rear gardens, eroding the openness that is intrinsic to the character of the area. The rhythm and even spacing of houses would be also undermined, to the detriment of the local street scene.

6. Despite containing space for parking, cycle storage and water butts, the proposed dwelling would have a short front garden and limited green space overall. The proposal would also substantially reduce the garden associated with No 9. Irrespective of the site's proximity to open green space, the appeal proposal would introduce development with a disproportionately small garden to building ratio, atypical of the size of gardens that characterises the wider suburb.
7. Overall, I consider that the proposed dwelling would adversely affect the character and appearance of the area. As such, the development fails to accord with Policy CP6 of the Bath and North East Somerset Core Strategy, Park 1 of the Local Plan, adopted July 2014 as well as Saved Policies D.2 and D.4 from the Bath & North East Somerset Local Plan including minerals and waste policies, adopted October 2007, which seeks to ensure developments are of a high quality design, are well connected to their surroundings, and contribute positively to their specific local context.

Other matters

8. In support of the appeal, I have been referred to the existence of small gardens in the area. A number of smaller gardens identified are associated with mid-terrace groups, which have a smaller overall plot size in less conspicuous locations compared with the appeal site. These examples therefore do not represent a direct parallel to the appeal proposal, which I have determined on its own merits.
9. I have taken into account the recently completed detached dwelling to the front of 22 Rotcombe Vale referred to by the appellant. Unlike the appeal scheme, this development has left a large remaining garden for 22 Rotcombe Vale. While I agree that the new dwelling has a relatively small garden, the circumstances of its location, in a secluded cul-de-sac and adjacent to open fields, are markedly different to those at the appeal site. I do not know the planning circumstances that have led to development in garden plots being accepted locally. In any event, those that I saw served to confirm that such encroachment represents a harmful incremental loss of open space, which does not justify a further erosion of the character of the street scene that would arise from the appeal proposal.
10. The lack of an objection from the Highway Authority is a neutral benefit of the scheme; while not counting against the proposed development, it does not weigh in its favour. Whilst I recognise the need to significantly boost the supply of housing, the benefits of a single dwelling, even if in a sustainable location where there is a demonstrable demand, do not outweigh the harm to the character and appearance of the area identified above.

Conclusion

11. For the reasons set out above I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

H Porter

INSPECTOR