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## Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 20 December 2016

**by Alex Hutson MATP CMLI MArborA**

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

**Decision date: 13 January 2017**

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**Appeal Ref: APP/P0240/W/16/3152239**

**167 Hitchin Road, Stotford, Central Bedfordshire SG5 4JH**

- 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 Neil Rushden against the decision of Central Bedfordshire Council.
  - The application Ref CB/16/01257/FULL, dated 21 March 2016, was refused by notice dated 26 May 2016.
  - The development proposed is erection of a new 2 storey house adjacent to 167 Hitchin Road, Stotford.
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### Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

### Main issue

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

### Reasons

3. The appeal site comprises part of the rear garden of 167 Hitchin Road, a two-storey semi-detached dwelling located on the eastern side of this road. Development along this part of Hitchin Road typically comprises two-storey, semi-detached dwellings which display a strong frontage presence within the streetscape. In addition, each pair of semi-detached dwellings is seen in relative isolation, given that they are separated by a substantial gap. This, in combination with the generously sized rear gardens of these dwellings, adds a spatial quality to the area. Moreover, the low density pattern of development along the eastern side of Hitchin Road contrasts strongly with a recent and higher density housing development, known as Fairfield Park, located beyond a belt of trees to the west of Hitchin Road.
  4. The proposal would subdivide the rear garden of No 167 and would introduce a detached, two-storey dwelling onto the appeal site. I acknowledge that the proposal, which would appear as a chalet style bungalow, would be of more modest proportions than that of No 167. It would also be constructed from materials which would reflect the materials used in other dwellings in the area. Furthermore, I note that it would share the same access as No 167 without the need to create a new one.
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5. However, given its backland location, the proposal would introduce a form of development considerably out of keeping with the prevailing pattern of residential development along this side of the road. In addition, where other built structures exist in rear gardens in the area, they tend to appear ancillary to their host dwellings. Moreover, they do not share the features typical of separate dwellings such as separate boundary treatment and other domestic paraphernalia. Whilst the presence of trees, fencing and a workshop building would screen some views towards the proposal from along Hitchin Road, I observed that it would still be visible from this road through the access gates to the appeal site.
6. The proposal would therefore considerably reduce the spatial qualities of the appeal site and would appear incongruous within its context. Consequently, it would result in significant harm to the character and appearance of the area.
7. I note that the Council has recently granted planning permission<sup>1</sup> in respect of land to the east and to the north of the appeal site for educational and residential development. However, whilst this is likely to alter the character of the surrounding area, it would not alter the defining pattern of development that exists along this part of Hitchin Road, which is of semi-detached dwellings which front the street. Moreover, the Council has indicated that any development to the east of the appeal site would consist of a school playing field. This would maintain a sense of space in the vicinity of the appeal site. I therefore do not consider that these planning consents justify a planning permission in this instance.
8. The proposal would therefore be contrary to Policies CS14: High Quality Development and DM3: High Quality Development, of the Central Bedfordshire Core Strategy and Development Management Policies 2009. These policies require, amongst other things, development to respect the context, character and distinctiveness of an area. These policies are consistent with the broad aims and objectives of the National Planning Policy Framework which seek planning to take account of the different roles and character of different areas.

#### *Other matters*

9. The proposal would make a contribution to housing supply in the area. This would assist the Council in reducing its five year housing supply shortfall. Nevertheless, such a contribution, in the wider scheme of things, would be limited. I have also taken into consideration that the appellant has indicated a desire to provide a high quality home in close geographical proximity for his aging parents to remove the need for any formal care arrangement. Nevertheless, this need would be temporary whilst the dwelling would stand in perpetuity and as such, I afford this matter little weight. It is therefore my judgement that the harm I have identified to the character and appearance of the area would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits.
10. I acknowledge that the appellant has raised some concerns over the Council's procedures in dealing with his application. Nevertheless, this is not a matter for my consideration in an appeal under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

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<sup>1</sup> Ref CB/16/01455/OUT and Ref CB/16/01454/FULL

**Conclusion**

11. For the reasons set out above and having regard to all other matters, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

*Alex Hutson*

INSPECTOR