
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 5 June 2017

by Robert Parker BSc (Hons) Dip TP MRTPI

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

Decision date: 28 June 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/J9497/W/16/3165366
30 Grange Road, Yelverton PL20 6BJ

- 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 and Mrs P Russell against the decision of Dartmoor National Park Authority.
 - The application Ref 0445/16, dated 28 July 2016, was refused by notice dated 10 October 2016.
 - The development proposed is erection of two dwellings.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Application for costs

2. An application for costs was made by Mr and Mrs P Russell against Dartmoor National Park Authority. This application is the subject of a separate decision.

Main Issue

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

Reasons

4. The appeal site lies within a modern residential estate comprising mainly large detached two-storey houses. The area has a spacious character which is derived from the generously sized plots and the pattern of dwellings set back from the road behind open plan front gardens. The lawns and mature vegetation within individual plots contribute positively to the appearance of the neighbourhood and help to soften the built form of the estate, particularly where garden walls abut the pavement.
 5. Grange Road is the steeply sloping spine road running through the centre of the estate. The appeal site comprises part of the garden to No 30 which lies near the bottom of the hill. A significant portion of the site is publicly visible from the highway due to its location outside of a boundary wall. This land is laid to grass with a number of sizeable shrubs screening the wall itself. The greenery is attractive and in my view it is an important component of the street scene.
 6. The proposal is to replace this landscaped area with a pair of semi-detached dwellings. The houses would be substantially closer to the road than other properties in Grange Road, including those properties adjoining and opposite
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the site. The corners of Unit 1 and its garage would almost touch the pavement. In my judgement, this would give the scheme an unduly cramped appearance. The new houses would be overly dominant features in the street scene and their siting would be out of harmony with the area.

7. The appellant points out the existence elsewhere in Grange Road of garden walls on the back edge of the pavement. However, these structures are considerably lower and less intrusive than a two-storey dwelling, and in most cases their impact is mitigated by greenery visible above the wall.
8. The appeal scheme would contribute to the supply of smaller homes for which there is a need in Yelverton. However, the provision of semi-detached units on comparatively modest plots would be at odds with the prevailing urban grain on this particular residential estate. The uncharacteristic semi-detached nature of the development would be emphasised by the staggering of the dwellings and the stepping of the roofs to address the site topography. In my opinion, the layout, form and density of the development would appear alien.
9. Accordingly, I conclude that the proposal would cause unacceptable harm to the character and appearance of the area. It would thus conflict with Policies COR1 and COR4 of the Dartmoor National Park Authority Local Development Framework Core Strategy Development Plan Document (2008) (CS) and Policies DMD3 and DMD7 of the Dartmoor National Park Authority Local Development Framework Development Management and Delivery Development Plan Document (2013) (DMD). These policies are consistent with the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) in seeking to secure high quality design which responds to local character and reinforces local distinctiveness.
10. The Authority has cited Policy COR3 of the CS and Policy DMD1b of the DMD which relate to the effects on landscape character and the natural beauty of the Dartmoor National Park. Given the appeal site's location on a modern residential estate within the existing built-up area, I do not consider that there would be any significant conflict with these policies.

Other Matters

11. I note the submissions in relation to Policy DMD21 of the DMD and its requirement that 50% of the units provided should be affordable housing to meet local need. This matter was not cited as a reason for refusal and the Authority does not wish to formally introduce it at this stage. Given my findings above, the issue of affordable housing is not determinative and therefore it is not necessary for me to consider it further.
12. Residents have raised a number of other concerns including in relation to parking, surface water drainage and the effect on the living conditions of adjoining occupiers. However, based on the information before me and my own observations, these matters would not constitute reasons to dismiss the appeal.
13. The parties make reference to the development at the former Leg O Mutton Inn near the junction of the A386 and Grange Road. I viewed this scheme during my visit. However, it does not persuade me that the appeal proposal is acceptable.

Conclusion and planning balance

14. The appellant states that the Authority is unable to demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing sites. No evidence is provided to support this assertion and consequently I am unable to reach a definitive conclusion. Even if the requisite land supply cannot be demonstrated, the harm to the character and appearance of the area would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the social and economic benefits of two additional dwellings, even having taken into account the site's good level of access to services and facilities.
15. In light of my findings above, I conclude that the proposal does not comply with the development plan taken as a whole and does not represent sustainable development in the terms of the Framework. There are no material considerations which would warrant a decision other than in accordance with the development plan.
16. For the reasons given above, and having regard to all other matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Robert Parker

INSPECTOR