



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 31 July 2017

by Chris Couper BA (Hons) DipTP MRTPI

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

Decision date: 08 August 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/V3310/W/17/3175077

Land to west of 14 School Lane, Combwich, Bridgwater, Somerset

- 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 Rodney Ingram against the decision of Sedgemoor District Council.
 - The application Ref 39/16/00009, dated 21 September 2016, was refused by notice dated 8 November 2016.
 - The development proposed is a one bedroom dwelling for two persons.
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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. Policy P 5 of the Sedgemoor Core Strategy 2006-27 (2011) ('CS') sets out that Combwich is an 'Other Sustainable Settlement' where infill housing development may exceptionally be supported subject to various criteria. Those include that it is appropriate to the scale, design and character of the settlement.
4. At its eastern end School Lane has an enclosed and fairly intimate character, with the buildings often set close to the highway. However, there is a marked change around Nos. 7 and 8, with the dwellings to the west typically set further back from the road, often on large plots, thus giving the area a more spacious feel. The dwellings here are detached or semi-detached, and most of the buildings are fairly substantial in scale. The properties in this part of School Lane are of an unremarkable, traditional appearance, but display some variety in terms of their form. Some are set at angles to the lane. Facing materials include brick, stone and painted render.
5. The appeal site comprises a roughly triangular parcel of land, which tapers to a point to the rear. It sits between No. 14, whose single storey front elevation faces the road, and the semi-detached, two storey, hipped-roofed dwelling at No. 18. It is covered with grass and, although described by the appellant as semi-redundant, in my view, it does not harm the streetscene.

6. The proposed dwelling would be considerably smaller in scale compared to many other buildings on this part of School Lane. Unlike its near neighbours on this side of the road, including Nos. 14 and 18, it would be arranged with its shorter elevation facing the lane.
7. Although the dwelling's set back from the road would generally respect the pattern of nearby development, its individuality, including its scale and layout, would make it appear incongruous, and it would be somewhat cramped on this awkwardly-shaped, small site. Although there is timber on some garages, it is not a dominant facing material in School Lane, and the harm that those aspects of the scheme's design would cause, would be exacerbated by the use of weathered larch cladding at first floor. Notwithstanding the range of nearby building styles, it would therefore jar with the surrounding area, and would draw-the-eye in this prominent location, elevated above the lane.
8. As there are parking forecourts and hipped-roofed properties nearby, those elements of the scheme's design would not appear out of keeping. Landscaping could soften the low mound's impact, and neither that, nor the scheme's very small rear amenity area, would have a significant impact on the streetscene.
9. CS Policy D 2 recognises that contemporary architectural styles and innovative approaches may be acceptable where appropriate. However, it also sets out that development should reflect the particular local characteristics of the site and the identity of the surrounding area. For the above reasons, I am not persuaded that this design approach is appropriate to this site's context, and the scheme would therefore conflict with that policy. It would also conflict with CS Policy D 5's requirement for housing to be compatible with the scale and character of its location. Whilst I have no reason to doubt the Council's conclusion that the broad principle of development complies with CS Policy P 5, the scheme would conflict with that policy's broadly similar stance on scale and character.
10. Although the appellant refers to the district's housing shortage, I have no detailed information regarding housing supply or local needs. Nevertheless, the scheme would make an efficient use of the land and, although the appellant states that the dwelling may be let for holidays, it could make a very modest contribution to the district's general housing supply through the provision of a single, relatively affordable small unit. That in a sustainable village location. Those are benefits which count in the scheme's favour, and which find support in various CS policies.
11. Whilst no objections were raised by interested parties, and there were representations in support, for the above reasons I conclude that significant harm would be caused to the area's character and appearance. The scheme's limited benefits would not outweigh that harm, and it would conflict with the development plan when considered as a whole. Consequently, and having regard to all other matters raised, the appeal is dismissed.

Chris Couper

INSPECTOR