

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 15 August 2017

by Simon Warder MA BSc(Hons) DipUD(Dist) MRTPI

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

Decision date: 29 August 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/M1520/W/17/3175389

Land adjacent 2 Holland Avenue, Canvey Island SS8 0QQ

- 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 Partridge against the decision of Castle Point Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 16/0777/FUL, dated 11 October 2016, was refused by notice dated 21 December 2016.
 - The development proposed is a two bedroom chalet bungalow.
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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 forms part of the garden to the side of a two storey, semi-detached dwelling located at the end of Holland Avenue. The scale and form of this property is typical of the area, albeit that there are a couple of bungalows to the east of the junction of Holland Avenue and Haarlem Road. For the most part, the gaps to the sides of buildings are fairly generous and the appeal site contributes to this characteristic.
 4. The footprint of the proposed dwelling would be similar in size to that of one half of the adjoining semi-detached pair. However, seen as a detached building, it would appear narrow. The first floor accommodation would be partly in the roof space, resulting in a lower eaves level than the neighbouring buildings. The scale of the proposed building would, therefore, be significantly smaller than neighbouring buildings and its detached, chalet form would be markedly different.
 5. Nevertheless, it would fill the space to the side of No 2 and the gap between the existing and proposed buildings would be narrower than is characteristic of the area. The proposal would not, therefore, accord with the aims of guideline RG2 of the Council's Residential Design Guidance Supplementary Planning Document 2012 (SPD) which advises that the space around new development should be informed by the prevailing character of the space around dwellings. Therefore, whilst the front of the proposed dwelling would follow the Holland Avenue building line, I consider that it would appear cramped on the site.
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6. The proposal includes the provision of two car parking spaces in front of 2 Holland Avenue and two spaces in front the new dwelling. A new area of permeable hardstanding would provide access to the spaces in front of the new dwelling and would result in the loss of part of the grassed highway verge. I recognise that there are extensive areas of hardstanding at the front of many properties in the area. However, most retain some highway verge and/or soft landscaping within the front garden. The proposed layout would provide very limited opportunity for soft landscaping at the front of No 2 or the new dwelling. This would not accord with SPD guideline RG12 which advises that in-curtilage surface parking for individual dwellings that is visible in the public realm should be interspersed and mitigated with suitable landscaping and boundary treatment. The intensive parking arrangement is also a further indication that the proposed layout would appear cramped.
7. Canvey Road is located to the west of the site. The appellant argues that there is not a strong building line along Canvey Road which requires protection in accordance with SPD guideline RG3. I agree. However, that is because no properties have a frontage onto this section of the road. The buildings are set well back behind fairly substantial hedges. Together with the absence of built development on the opposite site, this gives the road an open, spacious character. The proposed dwelling would be located significantly closer to the Canvey Road than others in the area. Whilst views of it from the road would be filtered by the existing hedge, the roof would still be visible, particularly on the approach from the south and when the hedge is not in leaf. It would, therefore, create an unwelcome intrusion into the open character of the road.
8. Overall therefore, I consider that the siting, layout, scale and form of the proposal would be harmful to the character and appearance of the area. As such, it would conflict with Policy EC2 of the Council's Local Plan 1998 which, amongst other things, requires the scale, siting and layout of proposals to be appropriate to their settings; it also requires the spaces around buildings to be enhanced by hard and soft landscaping. Nor would the proposal accord with National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) paragraph 60, which advises that it is proper to seek to promote or reinforce local distinctiveness, or paragraph 64, which states that development of poor design which fails to take the opportunities available to improve the character of an area should be refused planning permission.
9. The first reason for refusal refers to SPD guideline RG8. However, this is mainly concerned with the architectural detailing of buildings and there is no substantive evidence to demonstrate that the materials or detailing of the proposed dwelling would be out of character with the area.
10. I have had regard to the other concerns expressed locally, but none has led me to a different overall conclusion.

Planning Balance and Conclusion

11. The Council has not disputed the appellant's contention that the Borough does not have a five year supply of housing land. The figure is put at 1.6 years, which amounts to a considerable shortfall. In these circumstances Framework paragraphs 49 and 14 advise that planning permission should be granted unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies of the Framework taken as a whole.

12. I have found that the proposal would be harmful to the character and appearance of the area. This conclusion is supported by the Framework and development plan Policy EC2. Whilst that policy requires the density of development to be appropriate to its setting, I am not persuaded that this directly affects the supply of housing. Nor is there anything to suggest that the policy is otherwise inconsistent with the Framework. The policy can, therefore, be accorded substantial weight. As such, the proposal would have a significant and demonstrable adverse impact on the environmental role of sustainability.
13. In accordance with Framework paragraph 47, the provision of additional housing in a Borough where there is a sizeable shortfall in housing land should be afforded considerable weight. That said, the provision of a single dwelling would be a very modest contribution in the context of the housing needs of the Borough as a whole. This limits the weight I attach to the housing benefit of the proposal. I have not been made aware of other social or economic benefits.
14. Consequently, I find that the adverse impacts of granting planning permission would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits and that the proposal does not benefit from the presumption in favour of sustainable development. For the reasons set out above, the appeal should be dismissed.

Simon Warder

INSPECTOR