
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 19 July 2019

by R Sabu BA(Hons) MA BArch PgDip ARB RIBA

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 09 August 2019

Appeal Ref: APP/U2235/W/19/3228680

3 Daveila Headcorn Road, Platts Heath ME17 2NH

- 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 Mrs Sheilah Chapman against the decision of Maidstone Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 18/505959/FULL, dated 13 November 2018, was refused by notice dated 30 January 2019.
 - The development proposed is construction of new 2 bed bungalow.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. While I note that there are two reasons for refusal, based on the evidence before me, the main issue is whether the proposed development would provide a suitable location for housing with particular regard to the character and appearance of the area and the accessibility of services and facilities.

Reasons

3. The appeal site is located adjacent to No 3 Headcorn Road (No 3) at the edge of the settlement of Platts Heath. The prevailing pattern of development along Headcorn Road is characterised by detached dwellings with large and moderately sized rear gardens with open countryside to the rear that gives the area a spacious feel.
4. The proposed development would introduce a detached dwelling on a triangular plot that would result in a limited triangular shaped garden. The trees and vegetation at the boundary of the site are proposed to be retained, therefore views of the site would be limited. However, the triangular shape of the garden would result in limited usable private amenity area such that the proposed dwelling would appear overly large for the size of the plot.
5. The dwellings along Headcorn Road have larger rectangular shaped rear gardens and along with No 3, form the edge of the settlement. While I note the evidence relating to the size of the plot compared with a number of properties along Lenham Road, given its position at the edge of the settlement, the appeal site has a closer relationship with the properties along Headcorn Road than those along Lenham Road. I note No 29 Headcorn Road (No 29) which is located at the opposite end of the settlement. From the evidence before me, while similar in shape, No 29 appears to have a

significantly larger plot size than the appeal site such that it is not directly comparable with the proposal. When considered in this context the proposed plot with limited triangular private amenity space would contrast with the prevailing pattern of development along Headcorn Road and seem overdeveloped and cramped. It would therefore have an adverse effect on the spacious character and appearance of the area.

6. The proposed form and materials to be used on the dwelling would be in keeping with the character and appearance of the area, and the Council has not objected in this regard. I also acknowledge that the site has existing hardstanding and appears to be in need of some maintenance. However, while the proposal would be single storey, and the retained trees and vegetation may partially screen views of the dwelling, this does not override the harm to the open character of the area that would result from the shape of the site and limited usable private amenity space. Consequently, the proposed development would not provide a suitable location for housing with particular regard to the character and appearance of the area.
7. Turning my attention to the accessibility of services and facilities, the appeal site is part of the garden area of No 3 and lies within the settlement of Platts Heath. However, it is sited outside of settlement boundaries and therefore in the countryside in the terms of the Maidstone Borough Local Plan Adopted 25 October 2017 (LP). While there is a school in Platts Heath, from the evidence before me, it otherwise has limited services and facilities. Moreover, Headcorn Road has no footpaths or street lights such that it is likely that future occupiers would be reliant on the private vehicle for daily requirements.
8. However, the village of Lenham with a wider range of services and facilities is a short distance away and the proposed two-bedroom dwelling would be likely to accommodate a limited number of occupants such that car trips generated by the proposal would be likely to be short with limited frequency. Taking into account that opportunities to maximise sustainable transport solutions will vary between urban and rural areas, the environmental harm caused by the reliance on the private car would therefore be likely to be limited such that refusal of planning permission on this ground alone would not be justified.
9. Consequently, the proposed development would be in a suitable location for housing with particular regard to the accessibility of services and facilities. However, given the harm to the character and appearance of the area, it would conflict with Policy SP17 of the LP in this regard which states that proposals in the countryside will not be permitted unless they accord with other policies in this plan and they will not result in harm to the character and appearance of the area.
10. It would also conflict with LP Policies DM1 and DM30 which require developments to respond positively to, or where possible, enhance the local character and distinctiveness of the area. The proposed development would also conflict with LP Policy SS1 which states among other things that protection will be given to the rural character of the borough. In addition, it would conflict with the National Planning Policy Framework (Framework), in this regard.

Other Matters

11. I note concerns including regarding highway safety. However, the Council has not objected to the proposal in this regard and from the evidence before me I see no reason to disagree.
12. While I note the Maidstone Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) 2015, and the evidence relating to casualties in the area, it does not override the harm to character and appearance identified above.

Conclusion

13. For the reasons given above the appeal is dismissed.

R Sabu

INSPECTOR