
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 25 June 2019

by Jamie Reed DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 25 September 2019

Appeal Ref: APP/H0738/W/19/3225840

2 Fir Tree Close, Hilton TS15 9JZ

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant outline planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mr Warren Hopkins against the decision of Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 18/2584/OUT, dated 6 November 2018, was refused by notice dated 15 February 2019.
 - The development proposed is the erection of 1 No. dwelling.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matter

2. Outline planning permission is sought with all matters reserved. However, I note that the application was supported by an illustrative layout showing how a small dwelling could be accommodated on the site. I have had regard to this in reaching my decision.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the development on the character and appearance of the surrounding area.

Reasons

4. The appeal site forms part of the elongated side garden to 2 Fir Tree Close and is situated on the junction where Fir Tree Close meets Seamer Road, the main road through the predominantly residential village of Hilton. The plot extends northwards away from 2 Fir Tree Close along the side boundary of 5 Seamer Road.
5. A range of dwellings of varied designs and sizes occupy the village, all of which are sited on plots of generous proportions. These plot sizes result in there being notable separation between the sides of dwellings and the edges of their respective plots. In comparison, the appeal site appears long and narrower. Additionally, the dwellings along Seamer Road have attractive front gardens/lawns that are open in character and readily visible, which adds to the predominantly green and open character of the village. The appeal site itself is enclosed by a low dwarf wall with mature hedging / shrubbery behind and narrows in width towards its southernmost end.

6. When compared to the other plots in the village, the appeal site appears to be smaller and more irregular in shape, most notably due to its narrowing at its southernmost end. A study accompanies the appeal in order to demonstrate that the building to plot ratio would be similar to others nearby. Whilst this may indeed be the case, the exercise undertaken does not take into account the irregular, narrowing plot as described above. As a result of these constrictions, the introduction of a dwelling on the appeal site would appear awkward and constrained positioned very close to Fir Tree Close. Such an arrangement would lack the visual separation that is characteristic of the area and would be at odds with the more evenly shaped plot sizes and proportions of the other dwellings in the village.
7. Although the site would largely remain enclosed by the existing hedgerows providing some screening, even a single storey dwelling would be clearly visible above the existing hedge and there would be a significant loss of openness to this prominent corner plot. Even a taller hedge would be insufficient to ensure that the proposal would blend in with the prevailing green character of the area. Whilst some nearby properties are enclosed by tall shrubs and conifers there is no evidence to suggest that this could not be removed in the future. In any event, vegetation is unlikely to be permanent and cannot be used to hide otherwise unacceptable development. For these reasons, none of the sites referred to can be directly compared to that which is before me.
8. Accordingly, I find that due to the constrained nature of the site, the proposal would result in a form of development that would be uncharacteristic within its context within the village, thereby harming the character and appearance of the surrounding area. Consequently, the proposal would be contrary to the aims of Policy SD8 of the Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council Local Plan (2019) and paragraph 127 of the National Planning Policy Framework. When read together, these require proposals to be sympathetic and respond positively to the local character of the area.

Other Matter

9. The Government is seeking to significantly boost the supply of housing and there is no objection in principle to a residential development in this location where there is good access to services. The proposal would make a minor contribution to the area's housing supply and would create limited employment opportunities during its construction phase. However, whilst such benefits may indeed arise, these are insufficient to outweigh the clear harm I have identified to the character and appearance of the area.

Conclusion

10. For the reasons set out above, I conclude that the appeal is dismissed.

Jamie Reed

INSPECTOR