



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 10 February 2020 by Darren Ellis MPlan

Decision by K Taylor BSc (Hons) PGDip MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 20th March 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/V2635/W/19/3240949

Land adjacent 62 Salts Road, West Walton, Wisbech PE14 7EJ

- 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 A Freeman against the decision of King's Lynn & West Norfolk Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 19/00979/F, dated 30 May 2019, was refused by notice dated 26 September 2019.
 - The development proposed is 2 no. 3-bed semi-detached dwellings.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Appeal Procedure

2. The site visit was undertaken by an Appeal Planning Officer whose recommendation is set out below and to which the Inspector has had regard before deciding the appeal.

Main Issue

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

Reasons for the Recommendation

4. The appeal site forms part of the rear and side garden area of No 62 Salts Road and is adjacent to the boundary of No 64. This section of Salts Road comprises of a mix of semi-detached and detached properties with varying designs. Permission is sought for the erection of a pair of semi-detached houses.
 5. The properties are set back from the street and have large gaps between the buildings. This creates the feeling of a transition between the built-up area of West Walton and the open countryside beyond the settlement boundary and contributes towards the open and semi-rural character of this part of the street. The site is currently an open area in between two pairs of semi-detached properties and the proposal would cause the loss of a significant part of the gap between Nos 62 & 64.
 6. I note that some of the gaps between buildings have already been reduced by extensions or outbuildings, however the appeal scheme is of a significantly larger scale than the existing extensions and outbuildings. Moreover, the proposal would introduce two new dwellings to the street scene whereas the previous developments are viewed in the context of their host dwellings.
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7. The reduction in the gap between the existing properties, in addition to the resultant increase in the density of dwellings, would cause significant harm to the open and semi-rural character of the street and the immediate context in which the proposal would be seen.
8. The properties in this part of Salts Road are also characterised by large and wide rear gardens. The proposed dwellings would have rear gardens that are of a similar length to the surrounding gardens, however they would be considerably narrower which would be discordant with the existing character. Moreover, the ridge lines of the existing properties are of a similar height. The Council report that the proposed dwellings would have a higher ridge line than the surrounding properties; this is not disputed by the appellant. This would also be out-of-keeping with the street scene. However, even if the height of the proposed dwellings matched that of the neighbouring properties this would not overcome the other harm I have identified.
9. In addition, the car parking area to the front of the proposed dwellings would be shared by both properties, with the four car parking spaces situated to the front of plot 1. As a result, and in addition to the narrow plot sizes, and the loss of an open space with the resultant proximity to the adjacent properties, the proposed dwellings would result in a cramped appearance which would also detract from the character of the area.
10. The appellant states that landscaping could be provided to screen the car parking area. However, the proposed landscaping would not fully screen the development as views down the driveway would remain. In any case, the landscaping would not mitigate the whole of the cramped appearance of the proposal.
11. I have had regard to paragraph 130 of the National Planning Policy Framework ('the Framework'), which states that design should not be used as a valid reason to object to development. However, the Framework clarifies that proposals should accord with clear expectations in plan policies, and permission should be refused for development of poor design that fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area. I have found that the proposal would be unacceptable for this reason.
12. I have been referred to the properties at No 68 and 70, which were allowed on appeal in 2013¹. These dwellings are at the end of this line of properties on Salts Road; as such they did not fill in a gap between buildings. They are located close to the adjacent property at No 66, however there is still a significant gap between the buildings. The Inspector also gave weight to a planning permission that had been granted for a detached dwelling on the site. For these reasons I am not persuaded that this previous scheme is directly comparable to the proposal before me. In any case, this appeal has been determined on its own merits.
13. For the reasons set out above the proposed pair of semi-detached dwellings would detract from the character of the area. The proposal would therefore be contrary to policy CS08 of the Local Development Framework – Core Strategy (2011) and policy DM15 of the Site Allocations and Development Management Policies Plan (2016). These seek, amongst other things, to secure high-quality design and that the scale and layout of a development should respond

¹ Appeal ref. APP/V2635/A/12/2183545

sensitively and sympathetically to the local setting. In addition, there would be conflict with paragraph 130 of the Framework which encourages that the opportunities to improve the character and quality of the area are taken.

Other Matters

14. I acknowledge that the Council accepted that housing development is acceptable in principle on the appeal site and that no objections were raised regarding other matters, including the size of the car parking spaces and turning area. I have no reason to disagree, however this would not mitigate or outweigh the harm that I have identified.
15. The proposal would provide two additional units of accommodation and therefore the development would, to a limited degree, boost the supply of housing. This is a benefit of the scheme which carries limited weight in support of the proposal.
16. The appellant contends that the proposed dwellings would result in the best use of the site. However, as the proposal would cause harm to the character of the area this matter does not weigh in favour of the development to any significant degree.

Conclusion and recommendation

17. The benefits that would arise from the proposal would not outweigh the harm that would be caused to the character of the area. For the reasons given above, and having had regard to all other matters raised, I recommend that the appeal should be dismissed.

D Ellis

APPEAL PLANNING OFFICER

Inspector's Decision

18. I have considered all the submitted evidence and the Appeal Planning Officer's report and on that basis the appeal is dismissed.

K Taylor

INSPECTOR