
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 25 February 2020

by Benjamin Clarke BA (Hons.) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 26 March 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/Q0505/W/19/3242716

19-21 Godesdone Road, Cambridge CB5 8HR

- 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 Carlton Homes (Cambridge) Ltd against the decision of Cambridge City Council.
 - The application Ref: 17/0869/FUL, dated 15 May 2017, was refused by notice dated 14 October 2019.
 - Erection of a residential development containing five units (one 2xbed flats, three 1xbed flats and one studio unit) following demolition of the existing buildings on site
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed

Procedural Matter

2. The description of the development was amended from 'erection of a residential development containing five units (two 2xbed flats, two 1xbed flats and one studio unit) following demolition of the existing buildings on site' to 'erection of a residential development containing five units (one 2xbed flats, three 1xbed flats and one studio unit) following demolition of the existing buildings on site'. I consider that the amended description represents a more succinct summary of the proposed development following the submission of revised plans and have therefore proceeded on this basis.

Main Issues

3. The main issues are:
 - The effect of the development upon the character and appearance of the surrounding area, with particular reference to the character and appearance of the Riverside and Stourbridge Common Conservation Area (the CA); and
 - Whether appropriate living conditions would be provided for the future occupiers of the development, with particular reference to the availability of outdoor recreation space.

Reasons

Character and appearance

4. The appeal site consists of a building constructed with brick and wood cladding as the main external materials. The surrounding area is predominantly residential in nature. The site is located within the CA, the significance of this

- is, in part, derived from the presence of two-storey traditionally designed houses. Whilst the design of these houses includes some small-scale features which add some variety to the area, there is a general uniformity in terms of proportions.
5. There is a strong similarity on the surrounding dwellings in that the eaves of roofs are positioned immediately above the first-floor windows. In contrast, the proposed development would feature a sizeable space in between the upper-floor windows and the eaves of the roof. In consequence, this would give the proposed building a notably greater massing than the surrounding houses.
 6. In addition, the ridge height of the development would be greater than the adjoining dwelling in Godesdone Road. Whilst the difference would be relatively small, it would conflict with the general prevailing character where the ridge height reduces between adjacent properties in line with the topography of the street. In consequence, this arrangement would contribute to the incongruous nature of the development.
 7. This situation would be exacerbated by the presence of front dormer windows within the proposed development. In consequence, the dormer windows would give the proposed development an unduly bulky and strident form that would erode the traditional character of the surrounding area, and the CA. In addition, the appeal site is in proximity to the junction between Godesdone Road and Beche Road.
 8. By reason of this arrangement and the fact that the building would be set back from the highway by a limited amount when combined with its height would mean that the proposed development could not be readily screened. In consequence, the harmful form of development could not be readily mitigated.
 9. I note that there are a relatively small number of dormer windows in Beche Road. I am unaware of their planning circumstances, which lessens the weight that I can attribute to them, however, they occur on a very infrequent basis. Furthermore, they would not be readily viewed alongside the front elevation of the appeal proposal. Front dormers are not present in Godesdone Road, and it is these buildings that would have the strongest relationship with the proposed development. As a result, I do not find that the presence of front dormers in Beche Road sufficient to overcome my previous concerns.
 10. Occasional rear dormer windows are present within the wider areas. However, these are generally viewable at oblique angles and do not have the same level of prominence. Accordingly, they are not directly comparable to the development before me.
 11. My attention has been drawn to 1 Godesdone Road. Whilst this building has a different form to the adjoining property at 3 Godesdone Road, it is closely related in form to the commercial building at the corner of Godesdone Road and Newmarket Road. The scheme before me does not feature a complimentary relationship with either the buildings in Godesdone Road or Beche Road.
 12. I do not have before me the full planning circumstances of 22a-22d Godesdone Road. However, these buildings reflect the proportions of neighbouring dwellings, with variations arising from relatively small detailing. Furthermore, the detached house is set further back from the street meaning

that it is relatively well screened from the wider area. In consequence, they do not have the same impacts as the scheme before me and their presence does not allow me to disregard my previous findings.

13. Whilst I note that the existing building is constructed of a different design to many of the others within the surrounding area, its form means that it does not have the same degree of prominence as the appeal scheme would have.
14. I have identified some harm to the character and appearance of the CA. This harm would be less than substantial. Therefore, in accordance with the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework, I am required to balance this harm against any public benefits. Whilst the development would result in the re-use of the site and provide additional residential dwellings in a location where there is access to various facilities, such benefits are relatively small and localised in impacts. This means that they are outweighed by the notable harm to the CA. Accordingly, I do not consider that the public benefits outweigh the harm to the CA.
15. I therefore conclude that the development would have an adverse effect on the character and appearance of the surrounding area, including the CA. The development would therefore fail to comply with the requirements of Policies 55, 57 and 61 of the Cambridge Local Plan (2018) (the Local Plan); and the Framework. These, amongst other matters, seek to ensure that new developments use appropriate local characteristics to inform design; have a positive impact on setting; and preserve or enhance the significance of heritage assets.

Outdoor recreation space

16. The area surrounding the appeal site is characterised by the presence of terraced dwellings. In consequence, the pattern of development means that houses take up the majority of space within the surrounding area and that these dwellings are relatively close to the edge of the highway. The appeal proposal includes the presence of a garden; however, this would not be available for use by all residents of the development.
17. This creates a concern as, in consequence, residents would be deficient in space where activities such as outdoor leisure pursuits might take place. As a result, not all residents of the development would have appropriate access to all facilities necessary to secure appropriate living conditions.
18. Whilst I acknowledge that the size of the dwellings exceeds the minimum requirements, this does not offset the lack of access to appropriate outdoors space as the type of activities likely to be undertaken in a garden are intrinsically different from those that might take place inside a dwelling. I am therefore not persuaded that the size of dwellings is sufficient to overcome my previous concerns.
19. I note that the wider area features some areas of public open space. However, these areas would be a significant walk from the appeal site. In consequence, they are unlikely to represent convenient alternatives to the lack of on-site recreation space of a suitable size and access. Furthermore, these areas are, by their nature, public. As such, users of these spaces do not experience the same level of privacy that would be expected within a garden in a residential development. Therefore, the character of the immediate surroundings means

that the presence of public open space does not represent an appropriate alternative.

20. Policy 50 of the Local Plan is clear that direct access should be provided to external recreation space. As such, whilst the evidence before me suggests that outdoor space could not be provided in the form of balconies, the lack of such suitable access would prevent residents from readily undertaking outdoor recreation.
21. I am conscious that residents would have a choice as to whether they occupy the proposed development, however, the Framework is clear that developments should be designed so that they function well. The lack of appropriate access to recreation space is contrary to this objective
22. I therefore conclude that not all residents of the development would experience appropriate access to private recreation areas. In consequence, the development would fail to comply with the requirements of Policy 50 of the Local Plan. This policy, amongst other matters, seeks to ensure that all new residential units have direct access to private recreation space, with reference to the location and context of the development.

Other Matters

23. The evidence before me is indicative that the development would not have a significant adverse effect on the highway system and would not impinge upon the living conditions of the occupiers of neighbouring properties. However, these are only some of the matters that must be considered, and therefore these points do not outweigh the aforementioned harm.
24. I note that the evidence before indicates that the existing commercial unit may no longer be of the type required by modern business. However, as I have significant harm arising from the specific residential development before me, this does not outweigh my concerns.
25. The efforts made by the appellant in attempting to overcome the reasons for a previous refusal of planning permission and in engaging with the Council during the application process are matters of note, however, they do not overcome the harm as identified in respect of the Main Issues.

Conclusion

26. For the preceding reasons, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Benjamin Clarke

INSPECTOR