



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 24 July 2020

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

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 14th August 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/A1910/W/20/3247367

Greymantle, Hempstead Road, Bovington HP3 0HF

- 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 Ben Sterling against the decision of Dacorum Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 4/01553/19/FUL, dated 27 June 2019, was refused by notice dated 23 August 2019.
 - The development proposed is demolition of garage and construction of two detached two-bed dwellings.
-

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Application for costs

2. An application for costs was made by Ben Sterling of Kedgling Development against Dacorum Borough Council. This application is the subject of a separate Decision.

Main Issue

3. While I note the two reasons for refusal, from the evidence before me the main issue is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

4. The area surrounding the site on Hempstead Road is characterised by semi-detached and detached dwellings on large plots with long back gardens that borders an undeveloped field. As such, this side of Hempstead Road has a distinctive pattern of development that provides a spacious soft edge to the settlement.
5. The proposal consists of the erection of two detached dwellings sited to the rear of an existing detached house, Greymantle, and a semi-detached house, Rose Cottage. The position of the two dwellings within the undeveloped garden land would appear incongruous and would depart from the prevailing pattern of development, thereby diminishing the soft edge to the settlement and detracting from the sense of spaciousness of the area.
6. I acknowledge the comments of the Inspectors for the previous proposals on the site¹. The proposed scheme differs from those proposals in a number of ways

¹ Appeal refs: APP/A1910/W/18/3218819, APP/A1910/W/18/3195119, APP/A1910/W/18/3211726

including the scale and height, siting, and design of the dwellings. While the proposed dwellings would not be prominent from the street as they would have been in previous proposals, they would be clearly visible from the neighbouring properties. I note the evidence regarding green screening, however, there has not been a demonstration that it would mitigate against the adverse effects on the spaciousness of the area.

7. I acknowledge that the hardstanding would not be prominent from public views and would have a limited impact in private views. I also note the evidence regarding the trees along the boundary with the Green Belt and views from the rear of the site. However, the introduction of two dwellings and domestic paraphernalia would urbanise the site and significantly alter the green and spacious character and appearance of this side of Hempstead Road. As such, while I recognise that this scheme has sought to address the concerns of previous Inspectors as well as the advice provided by the Council during the application process and pre-application advice, for the reasons given above, the proposal would harm the spacious character and appearance of the area.
8. I acknowledge that planning permission for an extension to Greymantle has been granted by the Council and the appellant's intention to carry out that scheme. However, given the harm identified, this has not altered my finding on this main issue.
9. Consequently, the proposed development would harm the character and appearance of the area. Therefore, it would conflict with Policies CS10, CS11 and CS12 of the Core Strategy 2006-2031 Adopted 25 September 2013 which seeks, among other things, developments that reinforce the existing soft edges of towns and villages, enhance general character and respect adjoining properties in terms of layout. It would also conflict with the National Planning Policy Framework in this respect.

Planning Balance

10. It is common ground between the main parties that the Council cannot demonstrate a five-year housing land supply. The proposal would contribute two dwellings to the local housing supply and there would be limited social benefit through the contribution of future occupiers to the local community and temporary economic benefit during the construction process. Given that the proposal is for two dwellings, I attribute limited weight to these benefits.
11. I acknowledge the evidence regarding the environmental sustainability of the proposal. However, the lack of harm in this respect carries neutral weight.
12. Given the significant harm to the spacious green character and appearance of the area and conflict with the development plan, the adverse effects of the proposal would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits.

Other Matters

13. I note concerns regarding the service provided by the Council. However, I have assessed the appeal based on its planning merits and this point has not altered my overall decision.
14. I note local concerns including regarding the trees near the site, the design of the proposed dwellings and the outlook and privacy of neighbouring occupiers.

However, the Council has not objected in these respects and from the evidence before me I see no reason to disagree.

15. While issues regarding highway safety has not formed a reason for refusal, I note that the Highway Authority has expressed concerns with the proposal. Given the considerable length and narrow width of the access road, as well as the likelihood of the turning bay being used for parking, I am not persuaded that the proposal would not give rise to an unacceptable impact on highway safety. Nevertheless, given the harm identified above, this has not been a determinative matter for the outcome of this appeal.

Conclusion

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

R Sabu

INSPECTOR