
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 18 August 2020

by Stephen Normington BSc DipTP MRICS MRTPI FIQ FIHE

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 28 August 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/H0520/W/20/3245259

Land at Spring Mill, 125 High Street, Earith, Huntingdon PE28 3PN

- 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 Mrs Paula Carman against the decision of Huntingdonshire District Council.
 - The application Ref 19/01460/OUT, dated 18 July 2019, was refused by notice dated 17 January 2020.
 - The development proposed is the construction of 2 residential dwellings.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matter

2. The application was submitted in outline with all matters reserved for future consideration. Plans showing an indicative layout and access position were submitted with the application. I have had regard to these plans in the determination of this appeal.

Main Issue

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

Reasons

4. The appeal site comprises the side garden of No 125 High Street which forms the western edge of the built-up settlement of Earith. It is located on the northern side of High Street with open countryside to the north, west and south. The building group in the vicinity of the site on the northern side of the road, including the host property, comprises relatively large detached dwellings set in large plots with relatively generous spacing between the properties.
5. On the approach to the village from the countryside to the west, the character of the street changes approximately in the vicinity of No 115 High Street from large detached properties set in spacious plot to a more denser form of development with smaller properties spaced closer together and positioned nearer to the road. The spaciousness of development towards the edge of the village forms an integral part of the character of the settlement and, to a degree, provides part of the setting for its transition to open countryside.
6. Whilst the proposed dwellings would have relatively long rear gardens, the plot size and plot width would be significantly smaller than the average size of the

- properties in the immediate locality that form the character of the edge of the settlement. The indicative layout suggests that the siting of two dwellings on the site in a side by side staggered layout would result in narrow spacing between the dwellings and the host property. Collectively, these factors would result in a cramped layout and an unacceptable higher density of development than that which exists in the immediate locality. Consequently, the proposal would not be reflective of the spacious character of residential development that exists in the vicinity of the site on the northern side of the street.
7. The frontage of the site is currently formed by a substantial mature hedge. In order to accommodate a suitable access a considerable portion of the hedge would require removal. Furthermore, the provision of manoeuvring and parking areas to serve the proposed two dwellings would likely result in a significant portion of the site frontage being open to views from the road. Consequently, the harm created to the appearance of the area by the uncharacteristic cramped nature of the development on this part of High Street would be visible in passing views.
 8. I accept that the staggered arrangement of the proposed dwellings would be reflective of other properties on the street. However, the proposal would erode the established spatial character of the settlement of a denser form of development towards the village centre with more spacious and generous plots sizes towards the edge of the settlement. In being a relatively dense form of development at the edge of the settlement with the open countryside beyond, the proposal would not be consistent with this spatial character.
 9. Taking the above factors into account, I conclude that the proposed development would represent a cramped, over-development of the site at an unacceptably higher density compared to nearby dwellings. This would lead to a form of development that would be out of character with the surrounding area. Consequently, the proposal would conflict with Policies LP9(c), LP11 and LP12 of the Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036. These policies, amongst other things, require development to consider the effect on the character of the immediate locality and settlement as a whole and respond positively to its context and character.

Other matters

10. The appeal site is located immediately to the north of the Earith Conservation Area. Although the Council has raised no concerns regarding the impact of the proposed development on this designated heritage asset, I am nevertheless required to have regard to the statutory duty to consider the effect of the proposal on such asset. In applying the statutory test as set out in Section 72 (1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 I have had regard to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the designated heritage asset. I am satisfied that the proposal would preserve those interests.
11. I have taken into account the concerns of interested parties regarding the impact of the proposal on highway safety and the pressure on open green space in the locality. Although these matters have been carefully noted, they do not alter the main issues which have been identified as the basis for the determination of this appeal, particularly in circumstances where the Council has not objected to the appeal scheme for these other reasons.

Conclusion

12. For the above reasons, taking into account the development plan as a whole based on the evidence before me and all other matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Stephen Normington

INSPECTOR