



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: 01 September 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/V0510/W/20/3254424

**Land adjacent to 24 Straight Furlong, Pymoor, Ely, Cambridgeshire
CB6 2EG**

- 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 P Mannion against the decision of East Cambridgeshire District Council.
 - The application Ref 19/00949/OUT, dated 2 July 2019, was refused by notice dated 4 November 2019.
 - The development proposed is described as a three bedroom dwelling.
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Decision

The appeal is dismissed

Procedural Matters

1. The application was submitted as an outline application. However, all the matters of detail were submitted and none were reserved for future consideration. On this basis, the Council treated the submission as an application for full planning permission. I have therefore determined this appeal on the same basis.
2. The application was refused outline planning permission for two reasons. The second of these related to a failure to provide an adequate site-specific flood risk assessment and mitigation measures. Further details of proposed mitigation were included in a Flood Risk Assessment and with the appellant's statement which were subject to further consultation with the Environment Agency. On the basis of the information provided, subject to the recommendations provided by the appellant being included as appropriate planning conditions, the Council has confirmed that the further details provided now resolves its concerns relating to flood risk. This overcomes the second reason for the refusal of outline planning permission.
3. At the time the Council made its decision on the application a supply of 5 years land for housing could not be demonstrated. The Council's statement now confirms that, as at 20 April 2020, a 5 year supply of deliverable housing sites can be demonstrated. I therefore accept the Council's view that the policies contained within the adopted East Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2015 (the Local Plan) can be considered up-to-date and afforded full weight in the determination of this appeal.

Main Issue

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

Reasons

5. The appeal site comprises a rectangular area of land forming the side garden of the host property, No 24 Straight Furlong. The host property comprises a modest detached bungalow for which planning permission has been recently granted for a rear extension and first floor accommodation. At my site visit I observed that this permission did not yet appear to have been implemented. Open countryside lies to the rear of the site and a number of co-joined agricultural type buildings, of various construction styles and materials, are located in close proximity to the northern site boundary.
6. The site lies within the designated development envelope of Little Downham. Both main parties accept that the proposal is compliant with Policy Growth 2 of the Local Plan. This policy, amongst other things, sets out the Council's proposed broad overall strategy for the distribution of growth across the district. It identifies that within the defined development envelopes housing to meet local needs will normally be permitted provided there is no significant adverse effect on the character and appearance of the area. The Council accepts that the future occupiers of the proposed development would have good access to the services and facilities within Pymoor and Little Downham.
7. This part of Pymoor, in the vicinity of the site, is characterised by a ribbon form of development comprising of predominantly detached bungalows, with some having accommodation in the roof space, positioned on both sides of Straight Furlong with the frontages set well back from the road and occupying relatively wide and large plots. Open frontages are predominantly provided to property boundaries, particularly on the eastern side of the road. Consequently, this part of the road has a spacious character.
8. In my view, there is a difference in the localised character between both sides of the road in the vicinity of the appeal site. The western side comprises detached dwellings set in substantial plots with considerable separation distances between the houses. The eastern side displays a more dense character of development. The properties between and including Nos 20a and 22a are positioned relatively close to each other with the dwelling frontages almost occupying the full width of the plot. In particular, the southern side elevation of No 22a abuts the property boundary with a very small gap to No 22. Consequently, in passing views along the road, this part of the village, between the properties identified, displays the appearance of an almost continuous built frontage.
9. The proposed development would involve the construction of a modest sized detached bungalow, with accommodation in the roof space, positioned relatively close to the northern side elevation of the host property. It would have similar design characteristics in terms of roof profile, approximate height and fenestration as those approved in the recent permission for the extensions to the host property. It would be set with its frontage aligned with that of the host property and would occupy most of the plot width.

10. The Council accepts that, in isolation, the proposed design and appearance of the dwelling would be acceptable. However, it considers that the plot size and width is too small in comparison to the larger and wider plots in the vicinity. Consequently, the Council considers that the proposal would create a cramped form of development that would be at odds with the character and spatial pattern of development in the locality.
11. The proposal would mimic the appearance of almost continuous developed frontages that is provided as a consequence of the small separation distances between the properties at Nos 20a to 22a. Furthermore, the siting of the development would assist in providing some screening to the side elevations of the adjacent agricultural type buildings to the north which currently are quite prominent in views from the road due to their colour, design and materials. The above factors collectively provide some support for the proposal.
12. However, I have carefully considered the Council's calculations of plot size and widths and the comparison with nearby properties. The length of the proposed rear garden and that remaining at the host property would be commensurate with that of adjacent development. However, the plot size and plot width for both the appeal site and that remaining at the host dwelling would undoubtedly be less than that of the nearby development. The Council indicates that the plot size for the proposed development would be one third of the average size of properties in the immediate locality.
13. As a consequence of the above factors, the proposal would appear as a significantly denser form of development than that which exists in the immediate vicinity. An unacceptable cramped form of development would result with a narrow plot width which is out of character with the relatively wide and spacious plots which exist on this part of Straight Furlong.
14. The proposal would not accord with the distinctive form of development in the area of wide plots with dwellings having correspondingly wide front elevations that almost occupy the plot width. In contrast, the proposed development would have a narrow plot width and a corresponding narrow built frontage. The proposal would therefore be unacceptably at-odds with the established spatial pattern of development in the locality.
15. The Council has also drawn my attention to the fact that the provision of the access driveways to serve the appeal proposal and the host dwelling would provide limited opportunities for frontage landscaping. Other properties in the vicinity, particularly No 20a, have considerable areas of hardstanding to the front of the property. I have taken into account the submitted landscaping scheme and the width of the highway verge on this part of the road. In my view, sufficient area is retained to provide the continued 'soft' appearance to the frontage of the proposed development and the host property. However, this matter does not outweigh my view that the proposed development would appear as unacceptably cramped.
16. Taking the above factors into account, although finely balanced, I consider that the proposal would lead to an unacceptably cramped, over-development of the site resulting in a significantly uncharacteristic higher density form of development on the edge of the village. Consequently, the proposal would appear unacceptably at odds with the prevailing character and appearance of development in the surrounding area and conflict with Policies ENV1 and ENV2 of the Local Plan. These policies, amongst other things, require that

development proposals should demonstrate that their location, scale, form, and design will create positive, complementary relationships with existing development and complement local distinctiveness.

Conclusion

17. 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