



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 18 August 2020 by Ifeanyi Chukwujekwu BSc MSc MIEMA CEnv AssocRTPI

Decision by Chris Preston BA (Hons) BPI MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 7 September 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/P2935/W/20/3252744

Land East of 1 Bywell Avenue, Hexham NE46 1JA

- 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 Mr M Ninnim against the decision of Northumberland County Council.
 - The application Ref 19/04203/FUL, dated 15 October 2019, was refused by notice dated 17 January 2020.
 - The development proposed is new build 2-bedroom cottage starter home.
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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.

Preliminary Matters

3. The site address is taken from the Council's refusal notice, as this best describes its location.
4. Both reasons for refusal relate to character and appearance. I have therefore consolidated into one main issue.

Main Issue

5. The effect of the proposal upon the character and appearance of the site and the surrounding street scene.

Reasons for the Recommendation

6. The site is a green area with mature conifer boundary hedge located at the eastern end of Bywell Avenue at the junction with Monk's Terrace in Hexham. The character of Bywell Avenue is derived mostly from two-storey semi-detached dwellings set back from the road behind modest front gardens, with rear amenity spaces and parking to the side. There is a high degree of consistency in terms of the building line, materials and design which creates a pleasant suburban street. What appears to be a more modern detached dwelling sits opposite from the appeal site but this property is set back from

- the road on a reasonably spacious plot and is of a scale comparable to the surrounding dwellings.
7. Monk's Terrace, which is located at the end of Bywell Avenue, is characterised by two-storey terraced dwellings. The two streets are separated by a green area which comprises allotment gardens as well as the mature hedges of the appeal site. This provides a visual buffer between the built-up areas and is an important feature adding to the soft landscaped appearance, which significantly enhances the character of this part of the area.
 8. The loss of this visually pleasant green area on the street frontage would result in a cramped pattern of development detrimental to the appearance of the street scene. Furthermore, the proposed 1.5 storeys dwelling would be of a significantly smaller scale compared to surrounding properties. Unlike the majority of dwellings on Bywell Avenue the proposed dwelling would not benefit from any notable set back from the road due to the extremely narrow nature of the site. Consequently, it would project forward of the established building line and would be quite conspicuous in the street. That would be emphasised when travelling along Bywell Avenue due to the curvature of the road.
 9. In addition, the dwelling would taper in depth to take account of the narrow nature of the site and that would result in an unusual building profile in contrast to the prevailing rhythm of adjacent semi-detached dwellings. I recognise that good design does not always entail replicating neighbouring development but the unusual profile of the dwelling, necessitated by the site constraints, would fail to respect the attractive character of the area and appear somewhat contrived.
 10. It is acknowledged that No.31 Bywell differs from other properties in the area, being a detached property. However, as set out above, that property is of a similar scale to the surrounding properties and is set on a decent sized plot, unlike the appeal proposal.
 11. Policy H32¹ prescribes that private open spaces for houses should be a rear garden with a depth of 10 metres. The proposal would provide amenity space to the side contrary to this policy. This is in contrast with other properties in the area which mostly present both spaces at the front and rear. The garden would be in full view from the street and would not provide a private amenity space. That may well lead to future pressure to enclose the garden, either through planting or fencing, which would diminish the pleasant sense of openness which exists between the Bywell Avenue and Monk's Terrace.
 12. Regardless of the ratio of the proposed development to the site, it would still have significantly less open amenity space compared to other dwellings. The proposal would not be set back from the road with very little gap between the front wall and boundary. The rear wall would extend up to the site boundary. As a result, the proposal would appear cramped and overdeveloped in the context of the established character and would represent an incongruous addition to the street scene.
 13. Taking all the above points together, I find that the design, scale, location and layout of the proposed 2-bedroom cottage starter home would harm the character and appearance of the surrounding area. The other considerations

¹ Paragraph (e) subsection i

advanced do not outweigh the harm which would be caused by the proposal. Accordingly, there would be conflict with the aims and objectives of the National Planning Policy Framework and policies GD2 and H32 of the Tynedale Local Development Framework Core Strategy (2007).

14. These policies amongst other things seek to ensure that new development are designed appropriate to the character of the site and surroundings, existing buildings and their setting, in terms of the scale, proportions, massing, position and appearance of buildings, use of materials, structures and landscaped and hard surfaced areas.

Other Matters

15. The appellant suggests that proposal would provide additional sought-after affordable housing as compared to the type of housing available in the area. No information is before me to indicate what the value of the property would be or whether it would be genuinely affordable – it is not put forward as affordable housing in the traditional sense of being provided by a registered provider. However, I do recognise that it would be a modest property that would add to the range of housing stock in the area. Nonetheless, the benefit of a single dwelling in the context of the overall housing needs of the area is small and that is a matter that attracts limited weight in favour of the proposal.

Conclusion and Recommendation

16. For the reasons given I attach limited weight to the benefit of additional housing provision. However, the design, scale, siting and location of the proposed development would cause significant harm to the area's character and appearance. The proposal is contrary to relevant policies of the development plan in that respect and the harm significantly outweighs the benefit.
17. For the reasons given above and having had regard to all other matters raised, I recommend that the appeal should be dismissed.

Ifeanyi Chukwujekwu

APPEALS PLANNING OFFICER

Inspector's Decision

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

Chris Preston

INSPECTOR