



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 26 October 2020

by Andrew Bremford BSc (Hons) MRICS

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 11 November 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/M1710/W/20/3250198

The White Cottage, 35 Wellhouse Road, Beech, Alton GU34 4AQ

- 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 Mr & Mrs Pinnick against the decision of East Hampshire District Council.
 - The application Ref 55816/002, dated 8 May 2019, was refused by notice dated 2 October 2019.
 - The development proposed is erection of two detached dwellings with associated access and parking.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matter

2. Since the Council's decision was issued, the Beech Neighbourhood Development Plan 2019- 2028 (NP) has been subject to Examination, with the Independent Examiner's Report produced on 4 May 2020. The Council has issued a decision statement for the NP confirming that the modifications proposed by the examiner's report have been accepted, and that the submission NP has been altered as a result. Moreover, the decision statement confirms that the NP, as modified, may now proceed to referendum. During the appeal process, in response to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, updated Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) regarding neighbourhood planning was introduced. This sets out that where the local planning authority intends to send a neighbourhood plan to referendum, that plan can be given significant weight in decision-making¹. The Council's decision notice does not refer to the emerging NP. However, both main parties have provided comments about policies in the NP and I have had regard to those comments and the NP in the determination of this appeal.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the proposal upon the character and appearance of the area, with particular regard to its location within the Beech Special Housing Area.

Reasons

4. The appeal site is located within the Special Housing Area of Beech, where criteria (e) of Policy H10 of the East Hampshire District Local Plan: Second Review (2006) (LP) requires that plot sizes for residential development

¹ Paragraph: 107 Reference ID: 41-107-20200925

- is more than 0.2 hectares, excluding land in the highway, in order to retain the character of relatively low density housing. The site is 0.34 hectares in size and so an even split between the proposed two detached dwellings would result in plot sizes below the threshold required by criteria (e). Thus, in this regard, the proposal would conflict with Policy H10 of the LP. Furthermore, it would also conflict with criteria (d) of Policy BPC06 of the emerging NP which states that within the Special Housing Area any subdivision of plots should not result in a plot area of less than 0.2 hectares unless it can be demonstrated that this would conserve the character of the area.
5. Although Policy DM30 of the emerging East Hampshire District Council Local Plan (2017-2036) does not include any restriction on plot size, given that the draft plan is at an early stage of preparation and has not reached adoption stage, as a material consideration, it is afforded minimal weight in the determination of this appeal.
 6. While some development in the surrounding area is of a higher density, the area in the immediate vicinity of the appeal site on both sides of Wellhouse Road is predominantly characterised by low density housing with large dwellings positioned within substantial plots. These characteristics along with the space that exists around most buildings within their respective plots, combine to give the street-scene a spacious appearance. The appeal site, by virtue of being a large plot on the southern side of Wellhouse Road, makes a positive contribution to the character of the area.
 7. The proposed dwellings would be sited in approximately the same position as the previously demolished property and therefore in an elevated position within the plot relative to Wellhouse Road. The development would extend the built form across a greater width of the plot than that of the former building on the site and that of the approved² single replacement dwelling. Indeed, as a result of their size and the position of their footprint the proposed dwellings would substantially fill the width of each subdivided plot. In combination with the considerable form of the proposed buildings and their elevated position within the site, the development would erode the spacious character that exists around buildings within this part of Wellhouse Road.
 8. Within this context, the proposed dwellings would appear 'squeezed' within the plot. The proposal would, therefore, amount to a cramped form of development out of character with the general pattern of development in the immediate vicinity of the appeal site, which has a greater sense of spaciousness. The proposed dwellings would be at odds, and hence out of character, with most neighbouring properties which, by virtue of the space that exists around most of them, results in an area characterised by low density housing.
 9. Notwithstanding that the proposal would be for two different buildings in terms of scale, form and design compared to the previously refused proposal³ for a matching pair of detached dwellings, it would still result in a higher density of development at odds with the prevailing pattern of development described above.

² Planning application ref: 55816

³ Planning application ref: 55816/001

10. For the reasons outlined above, the proposed development would cause significant harm to the character and appearance of the area. Consequently, in this regard, it would not accord with Policy CP29 of the East Hampshire District Local Plan: Joint Core Strategy (2014), Policy H10 of the LP, and Policy BPC06 of the emerging NP. Collectively, these policies, amongst other things, seek to ensure that new development respects the character of the area and is appropriate and sympathetic to its setting in terms of its density and its spaces around buildings.
11. The proposed plot sizes would be greater than those of two dwellings approved⁴ by the Council at No 59 Wellhouse Road. However, unlike in this case, the Council considered that by virtue of the size of the buildings within their respective plots, the development in that case would conserve the low density and spacious character of the area. Thus, it cannot be said that the appeal proposal and the approved development at No 59 are directly comparable in terms of character and appearance.

Other Matters

12. Paragraph 59 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) states that to support the Government's objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes, it is important that a sufficient amount and variety of land can come forward where it is needed. Furthermore, paragraph 123 of the Framework states that where there is an existing or anticipated shortage of land for meeting identified housing needs, it is especially important that planning policies and decisions avoid homes being built at low densities, and ensure that developments make optimal use of the potential of each site.
13. However, in this case the Council contend that it can demonstrate a five-year supply of housing sites. Indeed, the Council states that it currently has 5.87 years supply of housing sites and the appellants have not contested this position. Consequently, in the context of '*where it is needed*' and '*where there is an existing or anticipated shortage of land for meeting identified housing need*' in the aforementioned paragraphs of the Framework, the modest contribution that the proposal would make in housing supply terms is a matter that weighs in its favour to only a limited degree.

Conclusion

14. For the reasons given above, and taking into account all other matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Andrew Bremford

INSPECTOR

⁴ Planning application ref: 54047/014