



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 16 November 2020

by Andrew Smith BA (Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 20 November 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/W0530/W/20/3256885 23 Butts Green, Whittlesford CB22 4NS

- 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 T Kennerson against the decision of South Cambridgeshire District Council.
 - The application Ref S/0149/20/FL, dated 15 January 2020, was refused by notice dated 29 July 2020.
 - The development proposed is extension to existing dwelling to create new 2 storey/2-bedroom dwelling. Remodelling and extension to existing dwelling.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matter

2. It is my understanding that a pre-submission draft of the emerging Whittlesford Neighbourhood Plan (the WNP) has been published. Even so, the WNP is at a stage that attracts limited weight. I shall consider the appeal on this basis.

Main Issue

3. The effect upon the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

4. The appeal site is located within a residential estate that is comprised of a mixture of semi-detached and terraced properties. The appeal property itself (No 23) makes up part of a linear row of three similarly designed pairs of semi-detached houses (the row). These properties are setback from Butts Green and occupy generously sized individual plots. Indeed, they contribute towards the local area having a formal and somewhat spacious residential character and appearance.
5. The proposed additional dwelling would be positioned to the side of No 23, which itself makes up part of the row's central pair of properties. The new dwelling's eaves and ridge heights would be consistent with those exhibited by No 23, as would its external facing materials and the arrangement of its street-facing window openings. Furthermore, the intended front porch element, front hedging and white guttering/downpipes would assimilate with similar such features in place along the row.

6. Nevertheless, an extension of significant bulk and mass is required in order to enable the creation of a new dwelling. This raises issues, not least due to the consistent way in which the row is currently formed and spaced. Indeed, a generous sense of separation exists between each of the pairs of semi-detached properties. This is most apparent at upper floor level, where side extensions have not occurred within the gaps between properties. It is also the case that uncharacteristically small and narrow residential plots would be created through the intended sub-division of the site.
7. Sizeable two-storey side extensions have been constructed at either end of the row. However, these do not affect the row's spacing and do not form separate self-contained units of housing. Indeed, whilst the main entrance to the new dwelling would be positioned to its side rather than its front, this would not disguise the proposal's intention to evolve a semi-detached pair of dwellings into a terrace of properties. This is not least due to the separate front garden/parking areas that are proposed.
8. I have noted reference to narrow separation distances being in place between properties situated nearby and to various previous extensions to semi-detached dwellings. Indeed, I was able to observe narrow gaps and extensions during my own inspection of the estate. However, it is the closest situated properties (those that form the row) that most strongly define the character and appearance of the site and its surroundings. I also note that I have not been made aware of any past local instance of a semi-detached pair of properties being extended/converted into a short terrace.
9. Examples of infill development granted planning permission at the nearby settlement of Sawston have been put before me. However, these are of very limited relevance to my considerations. Indeed, each of these other schemes would have been considered in the context of different surroundings.
10. In summary, the proposal would bring forward a discordant and unduly cramped form of development. Indeed, it would not constitute an acceptable form of infill development and a relatively low local housing density does not indicate a finding otherwise. The proposal would cause harm to the character and appearance of the area, and conflicts with Policy HQ/1 of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan (September 2018) in so far as it requires that a proposal must be compatible with its location and appropriate in terms of scale, density, mass, form, siting, design, proportion, materials, texture and colour in relation to the surrounding area.

Other Matters

11. I have noted objections/concerns raised by interested parties with respect to matters including parking, access and the effect upon neighbouring living conditions. However, as I have found the appeal proposal to be unacceptable for other reasons, it is not necessary for me to explore these matters further here.
12. The proposal would deliver an additional housing unit and the National Planning Policy Framework (February 2019) reaffirms the Government's objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes and states that decisions should promote an effective use of land. However, whilst the nationally described space standard for a 2-bedroom, 3-person dwelling would be met and the site has good accessibility to surrounding facilities and services, the contribution of

one additional dwelling would be modest and would not outweigh the significant harm that I have identified would be caused by the proposal to the character and appearance of the area.

13. The proposal conflicts with the development plan when read as a whole, and material considerations do not lead me to a decision otherwise.

Conclusion

14. For the reasons given above, the appeal is dismissed.

Andrew Smith

INSPECTOR