



Appeal Decisions

Site Visit made on 2 March 2021

by S M Holden BSc(Hons) MSc CEng MICE CTPP FCIHT MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 10 March 2021.

Appeal A Ref: APP/G2245/W/20/3259038

Land r/o 51 Wickenden Road, Sevenoaks, TN13 3PL

- 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 Kentmere Homes Limited against the decision of Sevenoaks District Council.
 - The application Ref 20/01056/FUL, dated 15 April 2020, was refused by notice dated 26 June 2020.
 - The development proposed is erection of detached two bedroom dwelling with associated parking, secure bin and cycle storage and amenity space on land to rear of 51 Wickenden Road with access achieved from rear (Littlewood).
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Appeal B Ref: APP/G2245/W/20/3259037

Land r/o 49 Wickenden Road, Sevenoaks, TN13 3PL

- 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 Kentmere Homes Limited against the decision of Sevenoaks District Council.
 - The application Ref 20/01627/FUL, dated 11 June 2020, was refused by notice dated 20 August 2020.
 - The development proposed is erection of detached two bedroom dwelling with associated parking, secure bin and cycle storage and amenity space on land to rear of 49 Wickenden Road with access achieved from rear (Littlewood).
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Decisions

1. Both appeals are dismissed.

Preliminary Matter

2. Two separate applications to erect a single dwelling on each of two adjacent sites were submitted in April and June of 2020. Following the Council's decisions, the appellant submitted both appeals on the same date requesting that they should be determined together. This was on the understanding that both dwellings would be constructed at the same time in the event that the appeals were allowed. I have determined the appeal accordingly.

Main Issue

3. The main issue in both appeals is the effect of the proposed dwellings, both individually or collectively, on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

4. The section of Wickenden Road nearest the appeal site is a straight residential street characterised by 2-storey semi-detached dwellings typical of the mid-20th century. The street has a sense of rhythm and uniformity arising from the

strong building line, the symmetry of the dwellings with their hipped roofs, and the modest front and spacious rear gardens. By contrast Littlewood is a short cul-de-sac which was originally provided to give access to blocks of garages. It is now enclosed on one side by the rear boundaries of Nos 49-55 Wickenden Road and a series of parking spaces separated by small areas of landscaping on the other. The gardens of terraced properties in Hillingdon Rise back onto these parking spaces. The only property to have frontage onto Littlewood is a building facing the turning head at the end which comprises 4 flats but is similar in scale to a pair of semis. This apartment block is largely disconnected in townscape terms from the surrounding development.

5. The appeal sites are sections of the rear gardens of Nos 49 and 51, a pair of semis. On each site it is proposed to provide a small detached dwelling with a rear garden and two parking spaces in a tandem arrangement to the side. Although the houses would not have front gardens, they would introduce an active street frontage to Littlewood. There would be some loss of spaciousness at the rear of the Nos 49 and 51, but this would not be visually apparent from anywhere other than the immediate surroundings. As the parking area on the opposite side of Littlewood is open, the introduction of the dwellings would not result in the cul-de-sac feeling unduly enclosed. I consider that, if considered together, these aspects of the schemes would be acceptable. However, if one or other of the dwellings was constructed it would appear isolated and unacceptably intrusive within the pattern of development in Wickenden Road.
6. The design of the proposed detached dwellings would be at odds with the style and scale of development in the surrounding area where semi-detached and short terraces are the predominant building form. The proposed roofs would overhang the external walls giving the properties a top-heavy appearance. These would appear alien and unrelated to any of the other dwellings in the vicinity, further accentuating the disconnection between Littlewood, Wickenden Road and Hillingdon Rise. The proposed design, whilst addressing the need to protect the privacy of neighbours would not integrate effectively with the existing apartment block in Littlewood or harmonise with the semis that characterise Wickenden Road.
7. This leads me to conclude that whilst the principle of developing both sites together would be acceptable, the designs of the dwellings would not be, either individually or collectively. Consequently, the two proposals would result in harm to the area's character and appearance, contrary to Policy SP1 of the Sevenoaks Core Strategy 2011 and Policy EN1 of the Sevenoaks Allocations and Development Management Plan 2015. These policies require high quality design that responds to distinctive local character.

Planning Balance

8. The Council is unable to demonstrate a 5-year supply of deliverable housing sites. Consequently, paragraph 11 d) of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) is engaged.
9. The dwellings, subject to being delivered simultaneously, would provide a small but valuable contribution to the supply of housing in Sevenoaks. They would do so by making good use of land within the existing urban area as advocated by the Framework. These social and economic benefits attract moderate weight in the planning balance. The construction of only one of the dwellings would provide correspondingly fewer benefits.

10. However, the Framework also states that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development. It requires development to add to the overall quality of the area, to be sympathetic to local character and to maintain a strong sense of place, whilst optimising the potential of the site. I am not persuaded that the current proposals have achieved these objectives, either separately or together. On the contrary, the schemes have failed to take the opportunity to improve the character and quality of the area that these adjacent sites could provide if considered as a whole. This factor weighs significantly against the proposals which would result in permanent harm to the area's appearance.
11. This leads me to the view that the adverse effects would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits when assessed against the policies in the Framework taken as a whole. The presumption in favour of sustainable development therefore does not apply.

Conclusion

12. I have found that the proposal conflicts with the development plan and there are no other considerations, including the advice of the Framework, that outweigh that conflict.
13. For this reason, both appeals are dismissed.

Sheila Holden

INSPECTOR