



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 25 January 2021

by E Brownless BA (Hons) Solicitor (non-practising)

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: Wednesday, 21 April 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/F3545/W/20/3257077

Land adjacent to No.1 Rookery Green, Beck Row IP28 8EE

- 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 C Day against the decision of West Suffolk Council.
 - The application Ref: DC/20/0339/FUL, dated 20 February 2020, was refused by notice dated 13 May 2020.
 - The development proposed is described as 'dwellinghouse with two car parking spaces in the rear parking court adjacent to No.1 Rookery Green, Beck Row'.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matter

2. On the 1 April 2019, Forest Heath District Council and St Edmundsbury Borough Council were replaced by a single authority, West Suffolk Council. The development plans for the previous local planning authorities were carried forward and remain in place until such a time as they are revoked or replaced. It is therefore necessary for me to determine this appeal with reference to policies set out in the plans produced by the now dissolved Forest Heath District Council, with the exception of the West Suffolk Joint Development Management Policies Document (2015)(WSJDMPD) which has been adopted by both councils.

Main Issue

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

Reasons

4. The appeal site consists of part of the side garden of No 1 Rookery Green, which is the end two-storey link property in a closely grouped row located back from the junction of Rookery Drove and Shippea Hill Road. Within the locality, dwellings are varied in terms of their type, style, and pattern of arrangement. However, dwellings are generally attached to at least one other and are set back from the highway with a generous level of space around them. This adds to the overall spaciousness of the area and provides a beneficial respite in the wider grain of built form.
5. Nos 1, 3, 5, 7 and 9 form a staggered block of linked properties that are cohesive and pleasantly uniform in their appearance. They are angled to face the junction with a generous level of space around them. As a result, the group make a positive contribution to the streetscene.

6. When viewed from the direction of the highway junction, the proposal would take up the majority of the width of the plot, leaving a limited side gap with Shippea Hill Road. Moreover, notwithstanding that the gap to the side of No 1 is enclosed by a fence, it is nevertheless an important feature in the streetscene and it would be lost as a result of the proposal. Built form would be introduced in close proximity to the pedestrian footway and highway such that it would appear cramped within its plot and at odds with the prevailing pattern of development.
7. Although it would project no further forwards than the existing group of dwellings and would therefore preserve an area of open space, it would be sited close to the flank elevation of No 1 and appear as a detached dwelling thus unbalancing the row of linked dwellings. Taken together with the loss of space to the side of No 1, the proposal would result in a strident, dominant and discordant addition to the streetscene, particularly given its prominent position as the end plot adjacent to Shippea Hill Road.
8. Although the proposal would seek to complement the existing row of dwellings by replicating their plot size, height, scale, materials and the inclusion of a similar style of roof and arrangement of doors and windows, this would not overcome the harm I have identified above.
9. I therefore conclude that the proposed development would fail to preserve the character and appearance of the surrounding area. It would conflict with Policy CS5 of the Forest Heath District Council Core Strategy (2010) and WSJDMPD Policies DM1, DM2 and DM22. Among other things, these policies require high quality development that creates a sense of place and respects local distinctiveness.

Other Matters

10. The proposal would make adequate provision for parking and outdoor amenity space. There are no identified issues concerning contamination or flooding. However, the absence of harm is a neutral matter that weighs neither for nor against a proposal.

Planning Balance and Conclusion

11. Located within the settlement boundary, future occupants would have access to nearby services and facilities. It would make efficient use of the land and make a very modest contribution towards housing supply through an additional unit. There would be associated social and economic benefits from the construction and occupation of an additional dwelling.
12. However, the Framework advocates that good design is a key element of sustainable development. The proposal would result in significant harm to the character and appearance of the area. When assessed against the policies of the Framework taken as a whole, the adverse impacts of the scheme would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits.
13. The proposal would conflict with the development plan, and there are no other material considerations, including the Framework, which would outweigh this conflict. Accordingly, for the reasons stated above, the appeal is dismissed.

E Brownless - INSPECTOR