



Appeal Decision

Site Visit made on 8 June 2021

by M Chalk BSc (Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 02 July 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/W0530/W/21/3269815

Land north east of Rampton Road, Cottenham, Easting 544337 Northing 267460

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant consent, agreement or approval to details required by a condition of a planning permission.
- The appeal is made by This Land against the decision of South Cambridgeshire District Council.
- The application Ref S/4207/19/RM, dated 29 November 2019, sought approval of details pursuant to condition No 1 of a planning permission Ref S/2876/16/OL, granted on 10 May 2018.
- The application was refused by notice dated 16 October 2020.
- The development proposed is described as "approval of matters reserved for appearance landscaping layout and scale following outline planning permission S/2876/16/OL for a residential development comprising 147 dwellings including access."
- The details for which approval is sought are: Appearance, landscaping, layout and scale.

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. Permission is sought for reserved matters following the grant of outline planning permission. All matters other than access were reserved for future consideration as part of that permission. I have determined this appeal accordingly.
3. Prior to determination of the application the subject of this appeal, the proposed number of houses was reduced from 154 to 147. I have altered the description of development accordingly, following consultation with the main parties.
4. The emerging Cottenham Neighbourhood Plan has been examined and a referendum was held in May of this year, the results of which found in favour of its adoption. Its policies therefore attract substantial weight.

Background and Main Issue

5. The Council refused planning permission for the proposed development on the grounds of the size of the houses being not in keeping with the scale and character of the surrounding area, and the impact on an identified vista within the emerging Cottenham Neighbourhood Plan.
6. The main issue is therefore the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

7. The proposed development would occupy a prominent location on the edge of the settlement. While some new planting is proposed along part of the site frontage, the new dwellings would be in clear view along Rampton Road, especially those closest to that road. Most of the proposed new dwellings would be significantly taller than those in the wider Rampton Road street scene, and this would result in a particularly evident contrast between the new and existing houses that would sit next to one another along Rampton Road. The appeal proposal is of a significant scale, and it is imperative that development of such scale fit comfortably within the surrounding area. Due to the size of the proposed houses, this would not be the case and the development would result in a concentration of uncharacteristically large houses in this prominent location that would be out of keeping with, and harmful to, the prevailing character and appearance of the surrounding area.
8. Steep pitched roofs are commonly found within Cottenham, and there is no policy in the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2018 (the LP) or local guidance to state that taller houses will not be acceptable. However, Policy HQ/1 of the LP does require that development preserve or enhance the character of the local urban and rural area and respond to its context in the wider landscape, and that it be compatible with its location and appropriate in terms of scale. Similarly, Policies COH/1-5 and COH/2-2 of the Cottenham Neighbourhood Plan Referendum Version (the NP) collectively require that proposals for new buildings retain, or where practicable enrich, the character of the neighbourhood area as appropriate to their location and scale, including by being responsive to village characteristics such as roof lines, height and scale. The appeal proposal would therefore conflict with these policies.
9. Furthermore, the development would substantially intrude on the vista from Rampton Road to All Saints' church identified as Vista 2 in the NP. In allowing the outline permission for this development the Inspector found that the proposed development would have only a minor adverse significance of effect on landscape character. However, the Inspector also noted that this depended in part on the creation of an attractive edge to the development in relation to Les King Wood. While there would be some additional planting introduced as part of the development, it would nevertheless present a hard and unattractive edge to the wood, including the siting of some houses immediately against the wood with no meaningful separation.
10. The vista as identified in the NP is a narrow one, and there is a considerable distance from Rampton Road to All Saints' church, while limited views would remain towards the church from within the development. Nonetheless, the siting of the development at the edge of Les King Wood would effectively close off Vista 2 from Rampton Road resulting in the loss of the contribution that it makes to the character and attractiveness of Cottenham. The appeal proposal therefore conflicts with Policy COH/1-1 of the NP, which requires amongst other criteria that development proposals take account of the vista from Rampton Road towards All Saints' church.
11. My attention has been drawn to other residential developments in Cottenham for which permission has been granted. I do not have the full details of those permissions before me, including the scale and siting of the proposed dwellings and how they relate to the character and appearance of the surrounding areas.

These other developments therefore only attract limited weight in the determination of this appeal.

12. The proposed development of 147 new dwellings would provide social and environmental benefits, including supporting the Government's objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes and creating affordable housing. These benefits attract significant weight, especially given the number of houses proposed. The Council can demonstrate a supply of housing land of more than five years, but this is not a maximum and does not diminish the value of new housing. Nevertheless, the appeal proposal would result in unacceptable harm to the character and appearance of the area, and the benefits of the proposed development would not outweigh that harm. There is consequently no reason to take a decision other than in accordance with the development plan.

Other Matters

13. The members of the Council's planning committee refused permission for the proposed development contrary to the officer's recommendation, and despite the development receiving support from the Council's Urban Design Officer and the Design Enabling Panel. This is not unusual, as decisions regarding the effect of a development on the character and appearance of an area are matters of planning judgment in which the committee members may conclude differently to officers and consultees.

Conclusion

14. For the reasons set out above, the appeal is dismissed.

M Chalk

INSPECTOR