
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 28 June 2021

by Gary Deane BSc (Hons) DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 19 August 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/Z2830/W/20/3265935

11 Furnace Lane, Nether Heyford NN7 3JS

- 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 Robert Swingler, (Goodall Design Services), against the decision of South Northamptonshire Council.
 - The application Ref S/2020/1580/FUL, dated 3 September 2020, was refused by notice dated 22 October 2020.
 - The development proposed is the erection of a single storey detached dwelling and parking.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural matters

2. South Northamptonshire Council and other local authorities have recently merged to form West Northamptonshire Council (WNC). This new arrangement has had little effect on the development plan policies or the issues that are relevant to this appeal and so I consider that it has not prejudiced any party.
3. WNC has recently adopted the Housing Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) and the government has just published a revised National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework). As these documents postdate the appeal submissions, both parties were invited to submit comments in relation to them. I have taken the representations received into account along with the SPD and the Framework.
4. While I have had regard to the planning and enforcement history of the site, which includes decisions made on application and at appeal, I have assessed the development sought on its own merits.

Main issue

5. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the local area.

Reasons

6. The appeal property is 2-storey semi-detached dwelling that stands to one side of a prominent corner plot at the junction of Furnace Lane and Hillside Road within a predominantly residential area. Along the same side of Furnace Lane as the site, dwellings mostly face the road and largely stand behind front gardens. The site is not located within a conservation area.

7. The proposal is to erect a detached single storey dwelling on the side garden of No 11, which is privately owned, with the site sub-divided between the new and existing dwellings. The new addition would face Hillside Road and be similar in scale and height to the neighbouring pair of bungalows. The proposed front elevation would be slightly set back from these single storey dwellings and the new sidewall would broadly align with the principal façade of No 11. The new addition would be lower in height and smaller than a dormer bungalow on the site that was refused planning permission on appeal in 2013.
8. Nevertheless, a substantial new built form would be introduced into generally undeveloped space that, at present, makes a significant and positive contribution to the local area. It does so by adding to a sense of openness next to the junction notwithstanding the partial enclosure of the site by a frontage hedgerow and a timber fence. It also establishes a clear visual break between existing built form and the road. Having viewed the site from the adjacent highways I have little doubt that the new building would curtail views into and across the site from the roads and significantly erode the spacious feel in the local street scene. That the new building would be placed 'side on' to Furnace Lane with a gable wall facing this highway would also jar with the well established pattern in which 2-storey dwellings generally front this road.
9. The proposed rear elevation would be close to the flank wall of No 11, which has been extended at the side following the removal of the detached garage that is shown on some of the submitted plans. The new addition would also occupy a significant part of the site with a front corner of the proposed building close to the adjacent footway and narrow gardens to the front and rears. With limited space on 2 sides, the proposal would appear to occupy a restricted plot and the layout would be perceived as cramped. By adding a new dwelling in this way, the proposal would sit uneasily with the more spacious pattern of existing development, in which adjacent buildings are well spaced apart.
10. For all of these reasons, the appeal scheme would appear as a visually disruptive and uncharacteristic intrusion into what is otherwise a relatively open junction. This impression would be most pronounced on the immediate approach to the site along Furnace Lane, in both directions. Additional boundary planting would not significantly lessen its harmful visual impact.
11. I saw that several properties in the local area have been extended and altered, as the appellant points out. However, none of these examples occupy the same local street scene as the site or have the same or very similar characteristics as those of the proposal. As such, I am unable to attach more than very limited weight to these cases in support of the appeal.
12. On the main issue, I conclude that the proposed development would cause significant harm to the character and appearance of the local area. As such, it conflicts with Policies LH1 and SS2 of the South Northamptonshire Part 2 Local Plan and Policies R1 and H1 of the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy Local Plan (Part 1). These policies aim to ensure that development does not result in the loss of undeveloped land or open space that contributes positively to the character of the area. It is also at odds with the Framework, which states that planning should seek to achieve high quality places. The Framework also seeks to make sure that development should add to the overall quality of an area and be sympathetic to local character.

13. Once complete, the proposal would add to the supply of housing in the local area. I have no reason to doubt that the accommodation, parking and amenity space provided would not meet appropriate design standards. External materials could be controlled by condition and the scheme would make efficient use of land that the appellant says is currently under used. It would also provide a type of dwelling that is well suited to meeting the needs of an ageing population. SPD Policy LH10 specifically encourages the provision of bungalows to reflect growing demand albeit in relation to larger residential schemes. However, these considerations, taken individually or together, do not outweigh the significant harm that I have identified in relation to the main issue.
14. Reference is made to the opportunity to erect a sizeable outbuilding on the site through the exercise of permitted development (PD) rights with no control over matters such as external materials. An illustration and details of a scheme that the appellant considers to be PD compliant has been provided. While an outbuilding of this type may well be visible from the road, it would differ to the proposal in design, size and use, being incidental to the enjoyment of the house. It would not provide self-contained accommodation and parking within a separate plot where people would independently live and visit. To my mind, the PD option, if it were to come forward, would have different consequences for the visual character of the local area and its impact would be less harmful than the appeal scheme. The existence of PD rights is insufficient reason to permit otherwise unacceptable development.
15. The Council and another interested party raise additional concerns with regard to the living conditions of future occupants, access and vehicle parking. These are important matters and I have taken into account all of the evidence before me. However, given my findings on the main issue, these are not matters on which my decision has turned.

Conclusion

16. For the reasons set out above, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Gary Deane

INSPECTOR