



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 9 June 2021

by Robert Fallon B.Sc. (Hons) PGDipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 06 October 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/H0520/W/20/3260421

Land at 23 Station Road, Holme, Peterborough, PE7 3PH

- 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 Darlow against the decision of Huntingdonshire District Council.
 - The application Ref 19/02207/FUL dated 31 October 2019, was refused by notice dated 3 April 2020.
 - The development proposed is two detached houses with garages, associated parking, manoeuvring and garden areas.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural matters

2. Since the appeal was submitted, a revised version of the Framework¹ has been published. Both main parties have been given the opportunity to comment on this and where applicable, I have taken their responses into account.
3. The description on the application form does not accurately describe the proposed development as both dwellings contain 5-bedrooms and not 4. I have therefore considered the scheme on the basis of the description suggested by the appellant in their appeal statement and am satisfied that dealing with the appeal on this basis has not prejudiced the interests of any party.

Main issue

4. The main issue is the effect of the development on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

Appeal site context

5. The appeal site contains a significant modern detached property set well back from the road with a substantial garden to the rear. The area consists of large-detached properties to the northern side of Station Road, with open countryside and farmland to the south. It is located in an edge of settlement position where built-form thins out, quite different to the more densely built-up core of the village, and as a consequence, the area has a spacious and verdant rural character.

¹ National Planning Policy Framework, Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government, July 2021.

Character and appearance

6. The development would intrude into the undeveloped stretch of garden land that provides, in conjunction with neighbouring dwellings, an important soft landscaped transition between the central built up-core of the village and countryside beyond. As a consequence, the scheme would appear out of character with the low-density edge-of-settlement pattern of this part of the village, which is characterised by large dwellings set in substantial grounds fronting onto the public highway with long rear gardens. The presence of other large houses set on spacious plots that back onto the appeal site on Short Drove reinforce my conclusion in respect of this.
7. The appellant states that the proposed dwellings would not be readily visible, if at all, from public vantage points, including the road frontage and that the streetscene would remain as it is at present. However, there is no guarantee that the existing mature landscaping that screens the site frontage would remain in existence in perpetuity, and if it was removed or reduced in height, the access road would become visible and have a harmful impact on the streetscene, which is not characterised by shared-surface private access roads to backland schemes punctuating the established built frontage. In any event, the fact that a scheme is not readily visible or screened by landscaping is not a sound basis upon which to justify an otherwise harmful layout as this could be repeated too easily and often for all forms of poor quality development.
8. In support of the appeal, my attention has been drawn by the appellant to two other appeals. However, these differ significantly in terms of:- (a) contextual character in built form layout, settlement pattern, density, landscaping and location; (b) planning policy background in terms of administrative area and development plan; and (c) local housing land supply context, and are not comparable to the scheme before me. I have as a consequence considered the scheme on its own merits.
9. The appellant also states that the Council has not objected to the detailed design of the dwellings. However, this does not remove the need for the development to respect the character of the area in terms of its layout and settlement pattern, or justify the harm identified.
10. In view of the above, I conclude that the development would be harmful to the settlement pattern and spacious character of the area. The proposal would therefore conflict with Policies L9, LP11 and LP12 of the Local Plan² which collectively seek, amongst other things, to ensure that development contributes positively to an area's character and identity and successfully integrates with the spaces between buildings.
11. I also find that the scheme conflicts with Section 2.1 of the Council's Design Guide³ and Paragraphs 126, 130 and 134 of the Framework, which collectively seek, amongst other things; (a) places of a high quality design; (b) development that is sympathetic to local character and reinforce local distinctiveness; (c) the maintenance of a strong sense of place; and (d) to ensure that planning permission is refused for development that is not well-designed, especially where it fails to reflect local design policies.

² Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036, May 2019, Huntingdonshire District Council.

³ Huntingdonshire Design Guide, Supplementary Planning Document – 2017, Huntingdonshire District Council.

Planning balance

12. I recognise that the scheme would result in benefits from;- (a) the provision of 2 dwellings towards the local housing stock; (b) future occupiers contributing to the vitality and viability of shops, services, facilities, businesses and community organisations in Holme and the wider surrounding area; (c) local employment during construction; and (d) a potential net gain in biodiversity. However, given that only two dwellings are proposed, I consider these benefits to be of limited value and that the adverse impacts of the scheme would outweigh these, when assessed against the policies in the development plan and Framework when taken as a whole.
13. In view of the above, I conclude that the proposal does not accord with the development plan and that other material considerations do not indicate that the proposal should be determined other than in accordance with this.

Conclusion

14. All representations have been taken into account, but no matters, including the benefits of the development and the scope of possible planning conditions, have been found to outweigh the identified harm and policy conflict. For the reasons above, the appeal should be dismissed.

Robert Fallon

INSPECTOR