



Appeal Decision

Site Visit made on 2 November 2021

by Benjamin Clarke BA (Hons.) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 16th November 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/F3545/W/21/3274223

28 Beechcroft, Stanningfield IP29 4RT

- 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 Kevin Cracknell against the decision of West Suffolk Council.
 - The application Ref DC/20/1398/FUL, dated 21 August 2020, was refused by notice dated 2 November 2020.
 - The development proposed is two new build semi-detached bungalows in grounds of existing bungalow.
-

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue relevant to this appeal is the effect of the development upon the character and appearance of the surrounding area.

Reasons

3. The appeal site is located in the village and is near to several other dwellings. The existing dwellings are characterised by their relatively limited proportions surrounded by garden areas. This gives the appeal site, and the surrounding area, a more open character that is complimentary to the rural areas beyond the settlement. The appeal site contains a line of trees adjacent to the front boundary.
4. The proposed dwellings would be constructed so that they have bigger footprints than the neighbouring dwellings. Given the current consistency between existing buildings, the presence of two new dwellings constructed to different proportions would appear particularly incongruous.
5. Although the existing line of trees has a notable height, they contribute to the generally verdant character of the street. In addition, the proposed dwellings would be sited closer to the highway edge than the existing dwellings within the surrounding area. By reason of this, and the increase in built form, the proposed development would erode the predominantly verdant character of the appeal site and the surrounding area.
6. This situation would occur even though the proposed development could be constructed from materials of the same palette to existing dwellings and have a similarly sized gap between them.
7. In result, the proposed development would create a more urbanised appearance, owing to the increased built form on the appeal site. Given that

dwelling is typically commensurate with the more rural surroundings, this erosion of the area's character would be significant.

8. This is a concern given the general prominence of the appeal site. In addition to views from neighbouring properties, the proposed development would also be visible from several other vantage points in the surrounding area, such as the junction between Beechcroft and Bury Road. There is also a bridleway nearby from which the development would be viewable. This means that the proposed development has the potential to be experienced by a notable number of people. These factors would render the appeal site prominent and strident.
9. I have given some consideration as to whether it would be possible to screen the development from views through the provision of additional landscaping. However, given the scale of the development in terms of its footprint and height, combined with the general proximity of the development to the site's boundaries means that any such screening would not be successful in mitigating the effects of the development. In addition, it would take some time to become established.
10. Near to the appeal site is a 1a and 2a Beechcroft. Whilst these are also infill developments, they are like many of the other dwellings in terms of footprint size and set back from the highway edge. In consequence, they do not have the same adverse effects on the character of the surrounding area as the appeal proposal would have.
11. I note that the estate was originally planned with two dwellings to the side of the appellant's dwelling. However, these were never constructed and owing to the passage of time, the appeal site and its environs have developed a verdant and open character that would be eroded through the proposed development. Therefore, this original plan does not overcome my previous concerns.
12. The proposed development would result in improvements to the appeal site's driveway. Whilst this would be of some benefit, the overall effect would be relatively small and therefore does not mitigate the previously identified adverse effects.
13. I therefore conclude that the proposed development would have an adverse effect upon the character and appearance of the surrounding area. The development, in this regard, would conflict with Policies DM2 and DM22 of the Joint Development Management Policies Document (2015) and Policy CS3 of the St Edmundsbury Core Strategy (2010). Amongst other matters, these seek to ensure that new developments maintain or create a sense of place and/or local character; utilise the characteristics of the locality; and contribute to a high-quality environment.

Other Matters

14. The proposed development would result in the delivery of additional dwellings in a street with limited opportunities for similar developments. Whilst this is a matter of note, the overall benefits to housing supply are relatively small and do not outweigh the previously identified harm.
15. The proposed development would provide appropriate living conditions for the future occupiers of the dwellings whilst ensuring that harm does not emanate to matters including the living conditions of the occupiers of neighbouring

properties and highway safety. The development could also be constructed to an environmentally sustainable design. Whilst these are of some benefit, they are only some of all the issues that must be considered. They therefore do not allow me to disregard my previous concerns.

16. The appeal scheme would be of some benefit to the appellant's family. Whilst this is a matter of note, I am conscious that, in general, planning decisions should be made in the public interest. Therefore, such benefits do not overcome my findings in respect of the effect of the development on the character and appearance of the surrounding area.

Conclusion

17. The proposal would therefore have an adverse effect upon the character and appearance of the surrounding area. The scheme would therefore conflict with the development plan taken as a whole. There are no material considerations, including the National Planning Policy Framework, that indicate the decision should be made other than in accordance with the development plan. Therefore, for the preceding reasons, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Benjamin Clarke

INSPECTOR