
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 24 November 2021

by David Reed BSc DipTP DMS MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 05/01/2022

Appeal Ref: APP/Z2260/W/21/3272438

Land adjacent to Coastguard Cottages, Pegwell Road, Ramsgate CT11 0NH

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant outline planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mr Christian Coppock against the decision of Thanet District Council.
 - The application Ref OL/TH/20/0564, dated 25 April 2020, was refused by notice dated 8 October 2020.
 - The development proposed is the erection of six bungalows with sedum roofs cut into bank.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matter

2. The application is in outline with all matters reserved except access and scale. However, floor and layout plans were included to illustrate how a scheme might look on the site and these have been taken into account.

Main Issues

3. The main issues are:
 - the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area, including the effect on the England Coast Path, Pegwell Conservation Area (CA) and the Coastguard Cottages;
 - the effect of the proposal on highway safety; and
 - the effect of the proposal on ecological interests.

Reasons

Character and appearance

4. The proposal is for a row of six bungalows with sedum roofs cut into the sloping ground between the Coastguard Cottages and Pegwell in the undeveloped gap between Ramsgate and Cliffsend on the northern side of Pegwell Bay. The south facing site is currently used as pasture for grazing horses and fronts onto a trackway which forms part of the England Coast Path. The bungalows would be served by a new access drive from Pegwell Road to the east.
5. The site lies outside any settlement as defined by the Thanet Local Plan 2020 (TLP) and thus in the countryside for planning policy purposes. As such the

proposal conflicts with TLP Policies SP01, H01 and SP24 which only allow new housing within defined urban areas and village confines and limit development in the countryside to certain purposes, none of which apply in this case.

6. The edge of the built-up area of Pegwell is well defined a short distance just to the east of the site, whilst immediately to the west lie the well-established row of Coastguard Cottages together with 'Driftwood', a bungalow set in good-sized grounds. A further dwelling is under construction on an adjacent site, but this is a replacement for a fire damaged dwelling and therefore sets no precedent for further housing in the area. This group of residential properties are set at present within an open, rural, coastal landscape. Further built development on the appeal site, even if low profile and with sedum roofs, would be unduly prominent, eroding the attractive undeveloped gap between the Coastguard Cottages and Pegwell. The result would be significant harm to the character and appearance of the area. In addition to the intrinsic harm to the landscape, the enjoyment of the coastline by users of the England Coast Path passing the site would be adversely affected.
7. The row of five single storey Coastguard Cottages with their tall chimneys on the high ground overlooking the bay are a distinctive feature in the landscape. Whilst their date is unclear and with some unsympathetic extensions, they can be regarded as non-designated heritage assets characteristic of the English coastline. In addition, they form part of the Pegwell CA which includes the south west corner of the appeal site and extends along the seafront to the east. Development on the open appeal site would significantly harm the character and appearance of the CA and extending the row of Coastguard Cottages with six more dwellings on the same alignment, however well designed, would harm their setting and devalue their significance as a discrete group. The benefit of six additional dwellings would not outweigh the heritage harm in this case.
8. For these reasons the proposal would significantly harm the character and appearance of the coastal landscape, the enjoyment of the England Coast Path, would not preserve the character and appearance of the Pegwell CA or the setting of the Coastguard Cottages as non-designated heritage assets. In addition to TLP Policies SP01, H01 and SP24, this would conflict with Policies SP26, QD02, SP36 and HE02. These seek to conserve and enhance Thanet's landscape character, including the sense of 'wildness' experienced at the coast, ensure development respects the character of the area, and protect the historic environment from inappropriate development.

Highway safety

9. Although the local highway authority specify the necessary requirements for an acceptable access from Pegwell Road, parking and pedestrian links in a letter dated 9 January 2020, no detailed plans were submitted with the application to confirm that these requirements can be met. Access is not a reserved matter. As matters stand it has not been demonstrated that the proposal would be satisfactory in relation to highway safety contrary to TLP Policies SP43, TP02 and TP06. These require safe and sustainable travel, safe and convenient walking routes and satisfactory parking provision.

Ecological interests

10. The application was accompanied by a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal dated 22 April 2020 which recommended further survey work to understand the

potential impact on reptiles which may be present on the site. This has not been carried out and could result in an adverse impact on protected species.

11. The site lies adjacent to the Sandwich Bay to Hacklinge Marshes Site of Special Scientific Interest and within the zones of influence of the Thanet Coast Special Area of Conservation, the Thanet Coast and Sandwich Bay Ramsar Site and Special Protection Area. In each case visitor pressure from additional residents may adversely affect the integrity of the habitats concerned. Whilst a Strategic Access Management and Monitoring Plan (SAMM) has been prepared to identify a series of suitable measures to address this issue, the necessary financial contribution to the work has not been agreed.
12. In addition, the close proximity of the proposal to these designations could lead to further adverse effects as a result of increased light, noise or pollution. These potential impacts have not been assessed or any mitigation proposed.
13. For these reasons the proposal may have an adverse impact on protected reptile species and may adversely affect the integrity of nearby designated habitats in conflict with TLP Policies SP28, SP29 and SP30. These seek to protect European designated sites, require contributions to the SAMM and require a net gain for biodiversity assets.

Conclusion

14. The proposal would provide six additional dwellings which would help meet local housing needs and have social and economic benefits for the area. Given the apparent inability of the Council to demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing sites, this would be a substantial benefit. However, the proposal would significantly harm the character and appearance of the coastal landscape, local heritage assets and important ecological interests. In addition, it may not meet highway safety requirements. Consequently, in this case the adverse impacts of the proposal would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits so planning permission should be withheld.
15. Having regard to the above the appeal should be dismissed.

David Reed

INSPECTOR