

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 7 December 2021 by G Sibley MPLAN MRTPI

Decision by L McKay MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 7 February 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/B3438/W/21/3278979

Land east of Sandfields, Kingsley Road, Cellarhead ST9 0DJ

- 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 Rudbrook Limited against the decision of Staffordshire Moorlands District Council.
 - The application Ref SMD/2021/0133, dated 1 March 2021, was refused by notice dated 27 May 2021.
 - The development proposed is construction of 3No, two storey, detached houses in place of the 2No dormer bungalows previously approved under SMD/2019/0452.
-

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Appeal Procedure

2. The site visit was undertaken by an Appeal Planning Officer whose recommendation is set out below and to which the Inspector has had regard before deciding the appeal.

Preliminary Matter

3. On 20 July 2021 the Government published a revised version of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework). The parties have had the opportunity to comment on the revised Framework as part of their appeal submissions.

Main Issue

4. The main parties have agreed that the proposal would not represent inappropriate development in the Green Belt as defined in development plan policy and the Framework. Having regard to the evidence before me I concur with their position that the proposal would constitute limited infill in a village and therefore is not inappropriate development.
5. Therefore, the main issue is the effect of the proposed development upon the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons for the Recommendation

6. The dwellings along Kingsley Road are arranged in sporadic groups leading towards the village of Cellarhead. The appearance of the dwellings varies and both hipped and gabled roof forms are evident. Opposite the site is mostly open countryside other than one two-storey dwelling close to the site. Dwellings in Cellarhead are more closely spaced than to the west of the site

where pairs of dwellings are set in generous plots. While some of those paired dwellings have two-storey side extensions, most are separated by single storey additions, which give a sense of space between them. Dwellings are consistent in scale at two storeys, most with relatively low ridge heights. Together these create a spacious, edge of village character and a sense of transition to the countryside.

7. The proposed dwellings would have a ridge height similar to the adjacent semi-detached hipped roofed properties. The gaps between each dwelling would be similar to some of these properties which have been extended to the side. However, the hipped roofs of the neighbouring pairs maintain space between them at roof level and allow for views through, creating gaps within the built frontage.
8. In contrast, the proposed dwellings would have tall gabled roofs overhanging the flank walls, reducing the gap between them at roof level. Each would also have two, two-storey front gable projections, which would be prominent features and increase the visual bulk of the dwellings. The combination of these features across the three comparatively wide dwellings would create a large expanse of built form with limited visual gaps between the dwellings. When approaching from either direction this would create a sense of much greater massing than the surrounding development. They would also be exact replicas of each other, and while matching designs have previously been accepted on this site, this consistent appearance would also contribute to their visual dominance.
9. The individual plots would be relatively generous, with the dwellings set back from the road and stepped to reflect ground levels. However, this would do little to break up the visual density of the dwellings, which would not reflect the character of the area or local patterns of development.
10. The appellant has compared the proposal with part of a development at Grove Court recently built near to the site. While there is a row of three dwellings across the rear of that group, they appear to have a lower ridge height than the proposed development, only have one two-storey front projection and are split by a single storey element. Combined, these features break up the scale and massing of the dwellings. Moreover, the dwellings in Grove Court vary in appearance and ridge heights. Therefore, that development is not comparable to the scheme before me, and better reflects the characteristics of the area.
11. Therefore, the proposed development would harm the character and appearance of the area. Consequently, the proposal would conflict with Policies H1, SS1, SS10, DC1 and DC3 of the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan (LP) which seek to ensure that development protects the character and appearance of the area. I find no conflict with the spatial strategy set out in Policy SS2 however.
12. Elements of the appearance of the proposed dwellings would incorporate the advice contained within the Staffordshire Moorlands District Council Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) (adopted 2018) and the Design Principles for Development in the Staffordshire Moorlands Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG). However, for the reasons above their overall scale and appearance would conflict with the SPD and SPG advice.

13. Furthermore, the proposal would conflict with the Framework as it would not add to the overall quality of the area or be sympathetic to local character.

Other Matters

14. There is a Grade II listed milepost close to the site. It derives significance from its function and position but has dwellings close to it. The proposal would not directly affect the milepost and with appropriate planting would not harm its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.
15. Permission has recently been granted for three dwellings on the site, of different design to what is before me. Therefore, the proposal would not result in the net increase of dwellings compared to that scheme, nor has it been demonstrated that it would result in any other benefits that could not equally be achieved by implementing that scheme. Consequently, the benefits of providing three dwellings carries very limited weight. The provision of suitable access and parking is a requirement for any housing development and is therefore a neutral factor.

Conclusion and Recommendation

16. There are no material considerations that indicate that the appeal should be determined other than in accordance with the development plan. For the reasons given above, the proposal would not accord with the development plan as a whole and, having had regard to all other matters raised, I recommend that the appeal should be dismissed.

G Sibley

APPEAL PLANNING OFFICER

Inspector's Decision

17. I have considered all the submitted evidence and the Appeal Planning Officer's report and, on that basis, and I agree and shall dismiss the appeal.

L McKay

INSPECTOR