



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 5 April 2022

by Helen Smith BSc (Hons) MSc MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: Monday 9 May 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/J3720/W/21/3288142

Tarsus Hotel and Restaurant, Daventry Road, Southam CV47 1NW

- 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 Daniel O'Neill against the decision of Stratford-on-Avon District Council.
 - The application Ref 21/01773/FUL, dated 19 May 2021, was refused by notice dated 10 September 2021.
 - The development proposed is the demolition of existing buildings and erection of 5no. detached dwellings, garaging and associated works.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The appeal site is subject to an extant planning permission 19/00450/FUL, which granted planning permission for the erection of 3 dwellings. The principle of residential development has therefore been established on the site.

Main Issue

3. The effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the surrounding area.

Reasons

4. The appeal site is a brownfield site located on Daventry Road, outside the settlement boundary of Southam. The site is adjacent to a private residential cul-de-sac, known as Calcutt Meadow. To the east of the site, on the northern side of Daventry Road, is open countryside. On the southern side of the road is an established residential area and a new housing development, known as 'Flying Fields'.
5. Although the appeal site marks a transition from the countryside to a more built-up environment, the northern side of Daventry Road has limited development up to the traffic island, with hedgerow and vegetation fronting the road. This area is predominantly characterised by the sloping open rural landscape and the semi-rural character of loose knit development. The residential areas located to the south are segregated from the appeal site by the main road and are therefore beyond its locality. Consequently, the proposed development would be viewed in the context of the adjacent loose knit development and the open countryside.

6. Calcutt Meadow is a loose knit residential development of large, detached dwellings in spacious plots. Due to this development being set back from the road and screened by vegetation, it has limited visual prominence within the street-scene.
7. Plot 1 of the proposed development would comprise a dwelling of 2.5 storeys. Its ridge height would be higher than the proposed 2-storey dwellings on plots 2 to 5, and the extant planning permission, thus appearing more prominent. The positioning of the proposed dwelling on plot 1 would be in close proximity to Daventry Road. As a result of its height and position close to the road, the proposed dwelling would be an incongruous feature when viewed from the street-scene.
8. In addition, the garden boundary of plot 1 would protrude out towards the highway verge and would require a solid boundary treatment to provide private garden space for the dwelling. This would introduce an unsympathetic edge to the development, increasing its prominence within the street-scene. Although the appellant suggests a condition could be used to secure landscaping treatment to soften the boundary appearance, it would still extend beyond the existing pattern of road frontage boundary treatments. Consequently, the protruding boundary and its harsh urban finish would not knit in visually with the semi-rural character of the site's locality.
9. Furthermore, the proposed development of 5 detached dwellings and associated garage outbuildings would increase the built form across the site. The former hotel was located to the rear of the appeal site. Therefore, the bulk and mass of the previous building was concentrated away from the road, appearing less obtrusive than the proposal before me. The density of the proposal and the size of the plots would be at odds with the neighbouring loose knit development. The proposal would therefore be a marked contrast to the existing pattern of development.
10. Whilst the size of the appeal site is smaller than the neighbouring development, the addition of 2 more dwellings than the extant planning permission would give the appearance of the buildings being squeezed into a contextually small space, adversely affecting the spaciousness of the area.
11. Although soft landscaping is proposed, views of the proposed dwellings would still be seen from Daventry Road, due to the ground level changes. The combined scale, height and massing of the proposed dwellings and associated outbuildings would appear dominant and highly visible within the street-scene, particularly when viewed from the approach heading towards Southam. The proposal would therefore fail to integrate successfully within its local context and would cause visual harm to the character and appearance of the surrounding area.
12. During my site visit I observed views of some of the properties within Culcutt Meadow from its cul-de-sac entrance, and glimpsed views through the hedgerow along Daventry Road. There are trees and vegetation separating the appeal site from Culcutt Meadow. However, views of the proposed development would be possible from within Culcutt Meadow, particularly during the winter months when the trees and vegetation lose their leaves. In addition, if the trees and vegetation were cut back or died off, then the proposed development would be exposed to Culcutt Meadow and therefore cannot be relied upon as a permanent visual barrier.

13. The appellant argues that the proposal would make efficient use of the site. However, paragraph 124 of the National Planning Policy Framework seeks to ensure that developments make efficient use of land, taking into account a number of factors, including the desirability of maintaining an area's prevailing character and setting. For the reasons given above, the proposal would not be an appropriate design to its setting and does not respond to the local character of the area. As such, the proposal would not integrate effectively with its surroundings. It therefore fails to accord with para 124 of the Framework.
14. The extant planning permission (19/00450/FUL) represents the fallback option for the appellant. There is no evidence to demonstrate that the extant planning permission could not be implemented or would be economically unviable. The fallback position is therefore a realistic prospect. In addition, the proposal does not offer any significant benefits when compared with the extant planning permission. I therefore conclude that the fallback position would not be as harmful as the proposal before me.
15. For the reasons above, the proposal would fail to accord with Policy CS.9 of the Stratford-on-Avon District Core Strategy (2016), which, amongst other things, seeks to ensure new development reflects the character and distinctiveness of the locality. The proposal would also fail to accord with Policy AS.10 of the Core Strategy, which seeks to ensure developments minimise their impact on the character of the local landscape and environmental features.
16. In addition, the proposal would conflict with the Council's Stratford-on-Avon District Design Guide (2001) (Part D), which requires developments, including layout and orientation, to be sensitive to the setting, existing built form, neighbouring uses, landscape character and topography of the site and locality. It would also fail to accord with the design objectives of the National Planning Policy Framework.

Other Matters

17. Although the proposal would not cause highway safety issues or negative impacts on neighbouring residents living conditions, these considerations do not outweigh the identified harm to the character and appearance of the area.
18. The proposed development would result in a tidying up of the site, which is currently derelict and an eyesore. However, this benefit would not be sufficient to outweigh the harm arising from the proposal.
19. Whilst the proposal would make a contribution to the delivery of housing for the area on a brownfield site that is accessible to a range of services and facilities, the weight of this small benefit would not be sufficient to justify the harm I have identified.

Conclusion

20. The proposal conflicts with the development plan as a whole, and there are no material considerations worthy of sufficient weight that would indicate a decision other than in accordance with it. The appeal should therefore be dismissed.

Helen Smith

INSPECTOR