



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 10 May 2022

by **O Marigold BSc DipTP MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 22nd July 2022.

Appeal Ref: APP/W3330/W/22/3292193

Land to the rear of 13 Ponsford Road, Minehead TA24 5DX

- 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 Hurley against the decision of Somerset West and Taunton Council.
 - The application Ref 3/21/20/097, dated 2 December 2020, was refused by notice dated 17 September 2021.
 - The development proposed is erection of a detached two bedroom dwelling with garden and parking.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. I consider that the main issues are the effect of the proposal on:
 - the character and appearance of the area, and
 - the living conditions of the occupiers of 13 and 15 Ponsford Road, and of the proposed dwelling.

Reasons

Character and Appearance

3. Ponsford Road consists primarily of detached and semi-detached dwellings. The appeal site currently forms part of the rear garden of No 13, which is adjacent to similar gardens of other properties in this road. The large semi-detached villas, and the space and vegetation provided by the existing long rear gardens, contribute to Ponsford Road's pleasant, suburban character.
4. The proposal would face onto Vennland Way, which is perpendicular to Ponsford Road. These roads, with nearby Cat Lane, have commercial and industrial buildings, and there is a large retirement home opposite the site of the proposal. Whilst these give the area a somewhat varied character, the garden to No 13 provides a sense of openness and greenery that owes more to the strongly suburban character of the dwellings of Ponsford Road.
5. The dwelling would be sited next to the existing garage serving No 13, close to a recently erected dwelling that also faces Vennland Way. The height, design and materials of the proposal would be similar to that property, as would its position set back from the edge of the road.

6. However, the proposal would have a two-storey height across its width, resulting in a large mass and scale. Whilst a gap would be maintained between the proposal and No 13, the scale of the new dwelling would reduce the sense of space and openness provided by the appeal site at present. As such, it would interrupt and detract from the positive contribution that the long garden at No 13 makes to this part of Vennland Way and its low-density and suburban character.
7. Furthermore, a large part of the proposed plot would be taken up with the dwelling and its parking. Although I accept that the adjacent new dwelling also has a limited plot size, this is an exception to the general character which, I understand, was partially justified by the previous building on that site. In the context of its surroundings, the limited plot size and the extent of development would result in the proposal appearing cramped and out of place, when seen from both Ponsford Road and Vennland Way.
8. For these reasons, I conclude that the proposal would harm the character and appearance of the area. As such, it would be contrary to Policy NH13 of the West Somerset Local Plan (WSLP), adopted 2016, which in summary, seeks to ensure that proposals integrate appropriately with their surroundings. For similar reasons it would also conflict with the advice in the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) that development must be sympathetic to local character.

Living Conditions

9. The prevailing plot sizes of properties in Ponsford Road are narrow in width. As a result, the rear elevation of the proposal would be positioned close to the boundary of the rear garden of No 15. This, together with the length and resultant mass of the proposal, means it would have an enclosing and overbearing impact on users of the rear garden to No 15, made greater by the largely unrelieved form of its rear elevation. As such the proposal would have a greater, more harmful impact on the garden to No 15 than existing buildings.
10. There would be no windows facing No 13 and the ground floor door could be screened by adequate boundary treatments. The proposed dwelling would have no windows facing to the rear, other than high level rooflights, which would not allow for views into the garden of No 15. I find that there would be no undue loss of privacy to the occupiers of existing properties. The occupiers of No 13 would have a smaller garden, but its size would still be sufficient to provide it with adequate living conditions.
11. The rear gardens of other properties in Ponsford Road are far enough away from the proposed building for the living conditions of their occupiers to be broadly maintained. The proposal would have its own external recreational space and would be a sufficient distance from existing dwellings to ensure its occupiers would have adequate living conditions in respect of outlook and privacy.
12. Nevertheless, for the reasons given above, the proposal would harm the living conditions of the occupiers of 15 Ponsford Road. As such, it would be contrary to Policy NH13 of the WSLP, which requires that a proposal must respond positively to its neighbours. For similar reasons it would also conflict with the advice in the Framework regarding ensuring a high standard of amenity.

Other Matters

13. The proposal would result in an incremental addition to housing supply, and there would also be benefits associated with supporting employment during construction, and from future occupiers who would bring trade to the area. Nevertheless, the benefits of one new dwelling in that context would be very modest.

Conclusion

14. For the reasons given above, I have found conflict with the Development Plan, read as a whole. No material considerations have been shown to have sufficient weight to warrant a decision otherwise than in accordance with it. I therefore conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

O Marigold

INSPECTOR