



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 5 July 2022

by A J Sutton BA (Hons) DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 11th August 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/W2845/W/21/3288347
2 Syers Green Lane, Long Buckby NN6 7QP

- 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 Watford Fields Developments against the decision of West Northamptonshire Council.
 - The application Ref WND/2021/0315, dated 18 June 2021, was refused by notice dated 10 September 2021.
 - The development proposed is described as 'Proposed construction of one dwelling house, new vehicular access, demolition of existing outbuildings and associated works.'
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The appeal site is at the edge of a settlement the core of which is the Long Buckby Conservation Area (CA). The designated heritage asset's historic interest is derived from its medieval street layout and high-quality varied architecture, which includes listed buildings and non-listed ironstone and brick properties with links to shoemaking. When determining proposals in conservation areas special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area.
3. Although the appeal site is on a main route to the village centre, it is some distance from the CA boundary, and I saw that it is at the bend of the road where the historic core is not appreciable. I am therefore satisfied that it is sufficiently separated so that changes to it would not affect the asset or its setting.
4. My attention is drawn to the review of the development plan, but I understand this is at an early stage. I attach limited weight to this matter accordingly.

Main Issues

5. The main issues in this case are a) the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area, and b) whether the appeal site is a suitable location taking account of the spatial strategy of the development plan.

Reasons

Character and Appearance

6. The appeal site is currently a well-screened garden space of a dwelling that has an elevated position on the approach to the village centre. The existing

dwelling is one of a number of relatively modern additions at the edge of the settlement. Whilst these may be considered to have no particular architectural merit, these properties, with an individual quality, are unified by their traditional architectural style, which is distinguished by gable, pitched and hipped roof forms. This style is also repeated at more recent developments in the area with one exception, but even in that case the dwellings roof appears hipped at the front. Therefore, despite variations in details and age, this style of built form brings a sense of coherency that characterises the area in a positive manner.

7. Surrounding development has been influenced by the undulating landform and has a piecemeal quality. However, whilst the area lacks regularity in layout and plot sizes, I saw dwellings fronting the road, near the appeal site, are well spaced and there is a distinct loose pattern of development at this edge of settlement location.
8. The footprint of the proposed dwelling would extend close to both side boundaries, and in doing so would substantially fill the space between the existing dwelling at the appeal site and the bungalow at 49 West Street. This would result in a tight grain of built form in the immediate vicinity of the appeal site, and this would be at odds with the pattern of development along this part of the main road.
9. The proposal is a distinctly contemporary design but there is nothing before me to confirm that it would be particularly innovative. This aside contemporary and historic forms can blend well in many instances. However, the proposed stridently modern dwelling would be squeezed between two existing relatively modern dwellings that have traditional and simple forms in respect to fenestration and roof shape in keeping with the wider area's character. As such the proposal would be in a context where a distinct contrast in architectural styles would not readily be absorbed.
10. The sharp lines of the asymmetrical roof and the expansive fenestration at the front elevation would appear stark and jarring against the traditionally proportioned neighbouring dwellings and their simple roofscape. Its proposed broken roof height would be a nod to the single storey neighbouring dwelling. But the box like clad side profile of the proposed dwelling would appear incongruous set close to the neat form of the bungalow and its pitched roof. The striking contrast of the overtly contemporary form would fail to blend with these properties for these reasons and would appear a discordant and dominating feature in the street scene as a result.
11. In light of the above I find the proposal would have a harmful effect on the character and appearance of the area. In this regard it would conflict with Policy S10 of the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy Local Plan (Part 1)(JCS) and Policies SP1, RA1 and ENV10 of the Settlements and Countryside Local Plan (Part 2) for Daventry District (Local Plan) which collectively require that development will achieve the highest standard of sustainable design and, amongst other matters, seeks to ensure that the scale, density, massing, height, layout and access of the proposal combine to ensure development blends well within the site and with its surroundings.
12. It would also be inconsistent with guidance of the Long Buckby Village Design Statement Supplementary Planning Document which advises that developments must be sympathetic to the general scale and design of their

surroundings unless there are exceptional reasons otherwise, and the Framework and National Design Guide which seek well-designed places.

Location

13. The spatial strategy of the development plan states that new development in rural areas will be limited. Such development will be guided by the rural settlement hierarchy which is topped by Primary Service Villages. Policy R1 of the JCS requires that once the housing requirement for rural areas has been met future housing development will only be permitted where it satisfies specific criteria. This includes that the development would result in environmental improvements on the site.
14. The proposal would remove existing outbuildings from the site. However, these appeared in a reasonable state of repair and are not unexpected structures in a garden space. In any event these single storey buildings would be replaced by a sizeable two storey dwelling which in this case would not demonstrate best practice in design and which would be harmful to the appearance of the area. It would not result in an environmental improvement for this reason and would therefore not satisfy this requirement. Nor would the proposal satisfy any of the remaining criteria of this policy.
15. Whilst noting that the rural requirement for development has been met, supporting text of Policy RA1 of the Local Plan clarifies the policy approach needs to ensure that the crucial role of Primary Service Villages is protected. In particular by maintaining the services and facilities within the villages. To ensure that the role of these villages is maintained, all development at the Primary Service Villages shall meet specified criteria. This amongst other matters includes that development shall protect the form, character and setting of the village. This would not be the case with this proposal as outlined above.
16. For this reason, I conclude that the appeal site would not be a suitable location taking account of the spatial strategy of the development plan. In this regard it would conflict with Policies SA, S1, S3 and R1 of the JCS and Policies SP1 and RA1 of the Local Plan that collectively outline the distribution of development, and which state that in rural areas will be limited with the emphasis on, amongst other things, enhancing and maintaining the distinct character and vitality of rural communities. It would also be inconsistent with the Framework in respect to sustainable development.

Other Matters

17. The proposal would support the Government's objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes and would add to the mix of houses in the area. Locally sourced materials, contribution to Community Infrastructure Levy and future occupants' expenditure in this Primary Service Village would be of economic benefit. The future occupants' contribution to the vitality of the village would likely be extremely limited given that it would be just one dwelling. The proposed sustainable construction methods and technological, energy and water efficiency measures would have short and long term environmental benefits. But all these benefits would be small given the scale of the development.
18. The comments relating to residents' amenity are noted as are matters relating to highways, safe access, and adequate garden space for the occupants of No 2

and the new dwelling. However, it is expected that development should not give rise to harm in respect to these matters and so these are neutral factors in this decision.

19. The appeal site is in a settlement with a range of local services and with good transport provision. The Framework provides support for small sized windfall sites and using suitable sites within existing settlements. This proposal would make an efficient use of land, but I have found that it would not maintain the area's prevailing character. It would not be suitable for this reason, and therefore this matter would not weigh in favour of this appeal. Moreover, the Framework states that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development. I have found harm in this respect and therefore the proposal would not be sustainable development. Accordingly, I find the limited benefits identified would not outweigh this harm in this case.
20. The Council, in the East Street decision, found conflict with JCS Policy R1 as I have in this appeal. I have also found conflict in this case with Local Plan Policy RA1 for the reasons stated. Therefore, unlike the East Street development, this proposal would not be compliant with other policies in the development plan, nor would it be of a form that is otherwise encouraged through the development plan when taken as a whole. Limited details have been submitted in respect to the Welton decision, so I have been unable to assess whether that case is directly comparable with this proposal. This aside, a decision made elsewhere would not in itself justify allowing a harmful development at this location. These examples have not been determinative for these reasons.
21. I have not been provided with a copy of policy ENV1 of the Local Plan, but this relates to landscape which is not a matter of dispute in this case. In any event, I have found this proposal would be harmful and would conflict with the development plan when read as a whole.

Conclusion

22. For the reasons stated above, having had regard to the development plan and to all other material considerations, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

A J Sutton

INSPECTOR