



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 7 July 2022

by Nichola Robinson BA (Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 15TH August 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/K0235/W/22/3292561

Greensleeves, 130 Stagsden Road, Bromham, Bedford MK43 8QR

- 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 Lorraine Deardon against the decision of Bedford Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 21/01785/FUL, dated 24 June 2021, was refused by notice dated 19 November 2021.
 - The development proposed is three new dwellings to rear of 130 Stagsden Rd, and all associated works, re-submission of 21/00524, PP-09544692.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

Character and appearance

3. 130 Stagsden Road is a dormer bungalow within the settlement of Bromham. The property is set within a large plot, back from the highway. The site is roughly triangular and increases in width towards the rear of the plot. The properties on Stagsden Road comprise a mixture of dwellings set within large plots set well back from the highway. This, and the mature vegetation within gardens and boundary hedges, contributes to a green and spacious character to the surrounding area.
4. Although there are pockets of higher density development, nonetheless the appeal site contributes to a pleasant mix of plot sizes. Set within rural surroundings, in my view the spaciousness and verdancy of the plot contributes towards a comfortable rural transition. I saw that there are similar pockets of lower density peppered around the irregular periphery of the settlement which similarly contribute to a soft edge to the settlement.
5. The 3 proposed dormer bungalows would be located to the rear of the site. The dwellings would be consistent with the design of the appeal and neighbouring property and the scale of the dwellings would not be at odds with the surrounding properties. However, there would be limited separation between each of the 3 units, and limited separation between unit 1 and the western site boundary. The proposed dwellings would therefore appear cramped and would be at odds with the current sense of spaciousness within the surrounding area.

4. It may well be the case that the level of car parking has been informed by the Council's parking standards, and that other properties and approved dwellings in the local area may have extensive areas of hardstanding within rear gardens. Nonetheless, an area for parking and turning would be sited to the front of the proposed dwellings. This area spans the entire width of the plot and results in a layout which is dominated by the access, parking and turning areas. This would exacerbate the overly intense nature of the proposal.
5. Boundary hedges and trees within the site would be retained and a shared grass area would be provided to the front of units 1 and 2. However, the lack of separation between dwellings is such that there would be limited opportunities for landscaping between the units. This would be at odds with the green and spacious character of the surrounding area. It may well be the case that the site setting could be attractive for future occupants, and that small gardens may meet the needs of say, older or retired persons, the intended future occupants of the units. Nonetheless this does not overcome the harm to the character and appearance of the area.
6. I have been referred to some other cases for the erection of dwelling houses within the Borough. However, I am not aware of the particular circumstances in these cases and in any event, I must consider the appeal scheme on its own merits. Overall, the proposal would be wholly unrelated to the spacious character of the appeal site and the surrounding area and would not respond to local character. Therefore, I conclude that the proposal would harm the character and appearance of the surrounding area and so would not accord with the design principles set out in Policies 28S, 29 and 30 of the Bedford Borough Local Plan (2020) which require all new development to be of the highest quality and contribute positively to the area's character and identity and take account of the principles of good design. The proposal would also conflict with those aims of policy HA3 of the Bromham Neighbourhood Plan (2021) which sets out how developments should not have a detrimental effect on the character of the area.

Other Matters

7. There is no evidence before me in support of the appellant's position that the construction of fewer dwellings here would be unviable. I acknowledge that the construction of 3 dwellings would make a small contribution towards the borough's housing supply. The Government's objective is to significantly boost the supply of homes. This factor weighs in favour of the scheme. However, 3 new homes would make only a small contribution in this respect. There would be short-term economic benefits associated with construction and Council tax revenues in the longer term. The appellant's aspiration to employ local builders is noted, as is the intention to make the proposed units available to older/retired persons (although there is neither a mechanism before me in that respect, nor ability for me to impose a condition to that effect).
8. I acknowledge this application follows a previous permission for a single dwelling here (Ref 14/01047/FUL). However, that is evidently a very different proposition which has, in any event, lapsed. I accept in numerical terms the footprint of the proposal would fit comfortably within the site area, and that there is some offset by virtue of the intended removal of outbuildings. Nonetheless, as set out above, the scheme would be incongruous visually in this context. I have given careful consideration to the various other matters

raised in the appellant's statement of case, including in respect of flooding, archaeological, arboricultural and other detailed design matters, and also the Council's procedural handling of the application. Whilst my decision focusses on the planning merits of the scheme, even were I to reason that the scheme were acceptable in all other respects, or could be made so via conditions, that would be effectively neutral in the overall planning balance. I also note that there is a separate process for challenging validation requirements, which has not been undertaken in this instance.

Conclusion

9. For the reasons given above, having considered the development plan as a whole along with all other relevant material considerations, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Nichola Robinson

INSPECTOR