



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 1 June 2023

by David Prentis BA BPI MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 7 June 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/A2280/W/22/3303161

16 Stour Close, Strood, Rochester ME2 3JX

- 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 G Hughes against the decision of Medway Council.
 - The application Ref MC/21/3436, dated 26 November 2021, was refused by notice dated 16 February 2022.
 - The development proposed is described as *construction of a two bedroom, two storey house with parking at the front and garden to the rear together with provision of bin and cycle storage and electric vehicle charging points.*
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main issue

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

Reasons

3. The appeal site is within a modern suburban estate of two-storey housing. Many of the houses are arranged in terraces running north/south, with front doors facing onto an attractive landscaped green. These properties have garages to the rear, with garage doors opening onto a cul-de-sac. No 16 Stour Close is at the end of a terrace running approximately east/west, facing onto a pedestrian path. These properties have small front gardens which provide space for planting, contributing to the overall character and appearance of the estate. The appeal property has a parking area in the front garden, with access via the side boundary from the end of the cul-de-sac.
4. The proposal would extend the terrace by creating an additional house beside No 16, on what is currently the side garden. The front elevation would be set back behind the front of the host property, such that the ridge height would be slightly lower. The design and appearance of the proposed dwelling would be in keeping with the rest of the terrace. The Council has not raised any objections in relation to internal space standards or the amount of private garden space. I see no reason to disagree.
5. The space between the proposed house and the pedestrian path would mostly be taken up by two parking spaces. The levels are such that the parking spaces would be higher than the ground floor level of the house. A vehicle using the space closer to the house would be parked across the front window of the living room. Not only would this result in a poor outlook for the occupiers, but it

would contribute to a very cramped appearance. A bin store for the existing and proposed houses would be sited in front of the existing house, backing onto the pedestrian path. The greater part of the space in front of the two houses would be occupied by parking spaces, internal paths and the bin store with little space left for planting. I consider that the overall effect would be of a congested space, dominated by hard surfaces. It would not reflect the design quality of the area.

6. The proposal includes two parking spaces to serve the two houses. This is less than the Council's interim residential parking standards would require. Those standards require 1.5 parking spaces for a two-bedroom dwelling and two parking spaces for a three-bedroom dwelling. The appellant submitted a photographic parking survey which suggested that nearby streets would have sufficient on-street capacity to accommodate any shortfall. However, local residents provided evidence that there is considerable pressure on on-street parking in the locality.
7. In addition to providing less parking than the standards would suggest, the proposal would result in the removal of two informal on-street parking spaces at the end of the cul-de-sac. It would therefore add to demand for parking on nearby streets. During my visit, I saw evidence that drivers resort to parking on verges, which in my view supports the evidence from residents that the pressure on parking spaces is greater than the appellant's survey would indicate. I saw that this is detracting from the character and appearance of the area through wear and tear on grass areas that were not designed to be parked on. The proposal would add to that pressure, thereby adding to the harm.
8. The National Planning Policy Framework states that all development should add to the overall quality of the area, be visually attractive and sympathetic to the surrounding built environment. However, I consider that the appeal proposal would fail to enhance its surroundings. It would erode the positive qualities of the locality and harm the character and appearance of the area. It would not accord with Medway Local Plan policies BNE1 and BNE2 which seek to protect the character, appearance and functioning of the built and natural environment and the amenities of those living in the area.

Other matters

9. The site is within an established residential area and is reasonably accessible to shops and services. The Council considers that there is no policy objection to the principle of infill housing development in this location.
10. Residents have raised concerns about overlooking. The adjoining terrace to the north is orientated at a right angle to the appeal property, so there would be no harmful overlooking of windows. There would be some overlooking of the back gardens of these houses. However, there is already some overlooking from the existing property at No 16. I do not think that any additional overlooking here would be so significant as to be harmful to living conditions.

Conclusion

11. The proposal would provide an additional dwelling in a reasonably accessible location where there is no objection to the principle of infilling. However, in my opinion the social and economic benefits that would bring would not be

sufficient to outweigh the harm that the proposal would cause to the character and appearance of the area. For the reasons given above, I consider that the proposal would be contrary to the development plan as a whole. Other considerations do not outweigh that conflict. It follows that the appeal should be dismissed.

David Prentis

Inspector