
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 12 September 2023

by S D Castle BSc (Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 25 September 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/D3830/W/23/3319202

**Land at the entrance of Green Meadows, Green Meadows, Lindfield
RH16 2PH**

- 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 The Welkin Property Company Limited against the decision of Mid Sussex District Council.
 - The application Ref DM/22/1890, dated 13 June 2022, was refused by notice dated 19 October 2022.
 - The development proposed is Demolition of existing structures and erection of 2 three-bedroom dwellings (Use Class C3) with associated parking, landscaping and footpath works.
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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 includes open areas of mown grass, 3 single storey garages, and an area of hardstanding that provides access to the garages and parking. The context of the site is that of a planned estate characterised by cohesive groupings of dwellings with shared design details, set within significant areas of open shared landscaping. Off-street parking in the area is generally provided in separate garage blocks rather than to the front of dwellings.
4. The appeal site is bounded to the south and west by the internal estate road that links The Welkin to Green Meadows. The site is orientated to the rear and side of surrounding bungalows located on The Welkin to the east and north respectively. Green Meadows is characterised by two storey blocks of flats arranged in a 'U' shaped layout and surrounded by substantial areas of shared green landscaping, including mature trees.
5. Policy 7 of the Neighbourhood Plan designates The Welkin, including the site, as an Area of Townscape Character. The Lindfield Village Design Statement advises that The Welkin has matured into an unspoilt and spacious group of dwellings. The prevailing openness of the site, and particularly the areas of green landscaping, contribute positively to the estate's distinctly spacious and verdant landscaped character and appearance.

6. The proposed dwellings have taken design cues from the surrounding dwellings in terms of their scale, gable roof forms, and facing materials. Taken in isolation, the Council does not object to the design of the dwellings. I see no reason to disagree.
7. I acknowledge that other green landscaped areas, by virtue of their prominence in views, and their orientation to the front of dwellings, make a greater contribution to the distinct character and appearance of the wider estate. I do not accept, however, that the site has the character of a hidden car park, or that views of the site are limited. The site has significant green landscaped areas and forms part of the attractive landscaped entrance to Green Meadows, visually connecting the open space of The Welkin to that of Green Meadows. The site's positive contribution to the verdant and spacious character of the wider estate is readily apparent both from The Welkin and Green Meadows.
8. The photomontages provided in the appellant's Townscape Appraisal¹ show how existing views across the site and into Green Meadows would be blocked by the dwellings. The loss of the open landscaped area, in combination with the intrusion of the proposed dwellings and their parking areas, would result in a more a built-up and defensive street scene that would be out of kilter with the area's verdant character and sense of spaciousness. The dwellings would, therefore, harmfully encroach into one of the estate's characteristic open green spaces. Neither the proposed demolition of the existing garages, nor the proposed landscaping, would mitigate the identified harm given the scale of the proposed dwellings.
9. The development would, therefore, harm the character and appearance of the area contrary to Policy DP26 of the Mid Sussex District Plan 2018, and contrary to Policy 7 of the Lindfield and Lindfield Rural Neighbourhood Plan 2016. Taken together, amongst other things, these policies require development to reflect the distinctive character of towns and villages, creating a sense of place and protecting open spaces that contribute to the character of the area. Furthermore, the proposal fails to accord with Chapter 12 of the Framework insofar as it would not add to the overall quality of the area and would not be sympathetic to local character.

Planning Balance

10. The proposal would result in some economic and social benefits, including through the development's construction and as a result of a slight increase in spending and patronage of services in the local area. The proposal would also make a limited contribution to the Government's objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes. I acknowledge that small sized sites can make an important contribution to meeting the housing requirement of an area and are often built-out relatively quickly. I also recognise that the proposal would involve previously developed land, would provide energy efficient modern homes, and would meet the Building Regulations Part M(2) requirements. However, as the proposal is for only 2 dwellings, the benefits identified attract limited weight.
11. I also acknowledge that limited biodiversity net gain could be achieved subject to an appropriate condition, and that electrical vehicle charging points for

¹ Townscape Appraisal by terrafirma (Rev F 21.03.23)

residents to use in the existing car parking spaces are proposed. I afford these environmental benefits limited weight.

12. I have noted the many representations from interested parties. I have taken them all into account. The issues raised are largely identified and considered within the Council officer's report on the appeal development. The Council did not conclude that they would amount to reasons to justify withholding planning permission. I have been provided with no substantiated evidence which would prompt me to disagree with the Council's conclusions on the other matters raised by interested parties, subject to the imposition of planning conditions.
13. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires applications for planning permission to be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations, including the Framework, indicate otherwise. Significant weight is given to the proposal's identified harm to the character and appearance of the area and consequent policy conflict.
14. The proposal would, therefore, conflict with the development plan when read as a whole and there are no other considerations that outweigh that identified conflict.

Conclusion

15. For the above reasons, the appeal is dismissed.

S D Castle

INSPECTOR