



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 5 September 2023

by H Smith BSc (Hons) MSc MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 16 October 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/W2845/W/22/3303335

4 Farmhouse Lane, Wootton Hill Farm, Northampton, NN4 9FG

- 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 David Murphy against the decision of West Northamptonshire Council.
 - The application Ref N/2021/0161, dated 2 February 2021, was refused by notice dated 27 May 2022.
 - The development proposed is erection of a detached dwelling on land opposite No. 1 Farmhouse Lane.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on highway and pedestrian safety.

Reasons

3. The appeal site is a triangular shaped parcel of scrubland located on the western side of Farmhouse Lane. Farmhouse Lane is a private road providing vehicular access to seven existing dwellings. The seven existing dwellings include six dwellings on Farmhouse Lane and access to the old farmhouse (No 9 Wootton Hill Farm), which has a driveway to its rear.
4. The existing private access road is around 4.5 metres in width with a 1 metre wide footpath on one side. The Council has indicated that the private road is not built to adoptable standards and is concerned that the proposal would result in significantly more than 5 dwellings being accessed off a private driveway of sub-standard width. The private access road currently serves seven dwellings, which is two more than the five dwelling limit set out in the County Council's standing advice.
5. The proposed dwelling would be sited near to where the private road meets the adopted cul-de-sac. It would also be located directly opposite the driveway access to No 9 Wootton Hill Farm and close to the driveway entrance to No 1 Farmhouse Lane. This leads to pedestrian and vehicular movements in and around the locality.
6. Whilst the proposed dwelling would provide off-road parking for two cars, the proposed parking area is limited in size and would therefore restrict the opportunity for vehicles to turn around within the site and leave in a forward gear. Consequently, vehicles would need to reverse onto or off the proposed driveway in order to park.

7. Vehicles entering and exiting the site using a reversing manoeuvre would lead to conflicts with vehicles and pedestrians. Given the narrow width of the private road and its pedestrian footway, oncoming traffic would not always be able to pass easily, so would need to wait for vehicles to manoeuvre into or out of the appeal site. This would hinder the free flow of traffic and increase the risk of accidents. Consequently, vehicles entering or exiting the proposed driveway in a reverse gear would result in additional hazards to pedestrians and road users, leading to unacceptable harm to highway safety.
8. The impact of this would be exacerbated given the positioning of the proposed driveway directly opposite two existing driveways serving neighbouring dwellings. Views could also be obscured by potential parked cars. This would lead to an increased risk of pedestrian and vehicle collisions in the area, to the detriment of highway safety.
9. I observed during my site visit the traffic calming measures in the form of a speed bump near to the entrance of the private road. Although this would slow traffic down, vehicles leaving the appeal site would still be reversing into moving traffic. As the visibility splay would extend across third party land beyond the site's boundary, the proposal would not provide adequate visibility from within the site boundary. Therefore, the proposal's access arrangements would pose an unacceptable risk to the safety of highway users.
10. I note the appellant indicates that records of past incidents and accidents has not been provided by the Council. However, such evidence would be of limited weight, as the concern is for future vehicular movements from the appeal site if the appeal were allowed.
11. In my view, the level of vehicular activity generated by the proposal's future occupant's comings and goings, and from visitors or deliveries would not be significantly different to what is experienced now from the residents of the existing seven dwellings. However, the manoeuvring in and out of the proposed development's access onto the narrow road would be dangerous to pedestrians and other road users for the reasons explained.
12. Planning permission for an additional dwelling on a site located at the end of the private road was granted at appeal in 2017¹. However, as that involved only one new dwelling located at the end of the private road, the Inspector was able to conclude that the development would be acceptable in relation to highway safety. That would not be the case in the current appeal and so the other appeal has little bearing on my consideration now.
13. Consequently, the proposal would have an unacceptable impact on highway and pedestrian safety. As such, the proposal would fail to accord with paragraph 111 of the National Planning Policy Framework which seeks to ensure that development proposals would not have an unacceptable impact on highway safety.

Other Matters

14. I have had regard to the letters of representation which have been received by various interested parties on other matters during the planning application and the appeal but have not been addressed as reasons for refusal by the Council. These have included concerns over the impact of the proposed development on

¹ APP/V2825/W/16/3167098

living conditions, biodiversity, and noise. However, due to my conclusions on the main issue, these are not matters which have been central to my decision-making in this instance, and I do not therefore address them any further.

15. The proposal would contribute to the local housing stock; however, this small benefit does not outweigh the harm that has been identified.

Conclusion

16. The proposal conflicts with the development plan as a whole, and there are no material considerations worthy of sufficient weight that would indicate a decision other than in accordance with it. The appeal is therefore dismissed.

H Smith

INSPECTOR