



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 26 September 2023

by P Terceiro BSc MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 2 November 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/H2265/W/23/3318490

16 The Ridgeway, Tonbridge, Kent TN10 4NH

- 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 Andy Watmore against the decision of Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council.
 - The application Ref TM/22/02574/FL, dated 21 November 2022, was refused by notice dated 24 January 2023.
 - The development proposed is described as the erection of single dormer bungalow complete with associated parking and amenity area.
-

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. In the banner heading above I have used the description of development provided in the application form. However, I have removed reference to the site address which is not in itself development.

Main Issue

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

Reasons

4. 16 The Ridgeway (No 16) is a corner plot close to the junction of The Ridgeway and Ridgeway Crescent. The appeal property has a long rear garden, which adjoins Ridgeway Crescent and is enclosed to the side by a tall close boarded fence. There is a detached garage within the rear garden of the appeal site which is placed near the footpath.
5. Ridgeway Crescent is largely characterised by detached and semi-detached dwellings of varying designs, including a bungalow opposite the site. Even so, the dwellings within the street have legible frontages and follow a similar building line, set back from the road with gardens and parking to the road frontage. This, together with the verges, creates a pleasantly spacious character to the area around the appeal site.
6. The proposed bungalow would be located much closer to the road than the surrounding dwellings. Consequently, the proposal would sit further forward beyond the front elevation of the adjacent dwelling at No 1 The Ridgeway (No 1), thereby disrupting the prevailing pattern of deep frontages observed in nearby properties.

7. The garage at No 16 breaks the general building line of properties in The Ridgeway and I acknowledge that the T-junction section of the road with the side gardens adjoining the street frontage may feel less spacious. However, due to its siting further forwards from No 1's front elevation, in combination with its scale, the bungalow would appear highly conspicuous when travelling on Ridgeway Crescent towards The Ridgeway, and the provision of side gaps would not be sufficient to mitigate against this. This would lead the bungalow to appear cramped within the street scene and cause harm to the spacious character of the area.
8. The bungalow would be located next to a two-storey dwelling, which is a relationship seen elsewhere in The Ridgeway, particularly in the bungalow opposite. This bungalow has a deep frontage, reflective of those observed in the street scene.
9. Although the appeal plot would have adequate garden space and its depth would not be perceived from the road, its constrained size would effectively push the proposed bungalow forward beyond the front elevation of No 1, resulting in a shallower frontage. As such, the presence of the bungalow opposite does not alter my findings that the proposal would be harmful to the character of the area.
10. Despite the diverse architectural designs observed in the street scene, these properties have strong active frontages which address The Ridgeway. The proposal would turn its side onto the street and provide a poor active frontage that would not be legible, at odds with the surrounding properties.
11. A significant length of close boarded fencing would be removed from the street scene to accommodate the proposal. However, for the reasons set out above, the proposal would appear at odds with the spacious character of the area and, as such, this would not outweigh the identified harm.
12. My attention is drawn to other developments that have been granted elsewhere in the Borough. However, the approved bungalows at No 15 and No 17 Estridge Way are set in a different context, where it does not appear to be a definitive building line established. I have only been provided with very limited details in relation to the applications at No 71 Cornwallis Avenue and at No 51 and No 53 Yardley Park Road, including when they were granted permission, or the specific circumstances and considerations at that time. As such, I can only give these other developments limited weight in my determination of this appeal.
13. In conclusion, the proposal would be harmful to the character and appearance of the area, in conflict with Policy CP24 of the Core Strategy 2007 (CS) and with Policy SQ1 of the Managing Development and the Environment Development Plan Document 2010 (DPD). Collectively, these policies seek to ensure that new developments reflect the local distinctiveness, are well designed and of high quality. The proposal is also contrary to the National Planning Policy Framework, where it seeks to achieve well designed places.

Planning Balance

14. The Council cannot demonstrate a 5 year housing land supply of deliverable housing sites and therefore the provisions of paragraph 11d) of the Framework should be applied.

15. The proposal would meet the Framework's objectives of boosting the supply of housing. However, even allowing for the identified shortfall, the benefits associated with a single dwelling would be small and the economic benefit that would be accrued from the construction process would be temporary and limited.
16. The adverse impacts of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area attract substantial weight and therefore significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits when assessed against the policies in the Framework taken as a whole. As a result, the presumption in favour of sustainable development does not apply.

Conclusion

17. Overall, I conclude that the proposal would conflict with the development plan as a whole and there are no material considerations of sufficient weight to indicate that a decision should be made otherwise than in accordance with it. Therefore, the appeal is dismissed.

P Terceiro

INSPECTOR