



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 4 October 2023

by C Billings BA (Hons), DipTP, MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 16th November 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/K0235/W/23/3318337

44 Cause End Road, Wootton MK43 9DE

- 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 Mrs Kelly against the decision of Bedford Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 22/01970/FUL, dated 1 September 2022, was refused by notice dated 30 January 2023.
 - The development proposed is a new dwelling and modifications to existing dwelling by blocking up of first floor side (east) window and the addition of front dormer, new access/crossover for existing dwelling.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are:
 - The effect of the proposed dwelling on the character and appearance of the surrounding area; and,
 - The effect of the proposed development on highway safety.

Reasons

Character and appearance

3. The proposed dwelling would be located on land to the side of the detached bungalow, 44 Cause End Road, which forms part of its garden area.
4. There is variety in the street scene along Cause End Road and indeed, as demonstrated by the appellant's evidence, the wider area. This includes a mix of scale and design of dwellings, some of which are high density. No 44 is at the end of a row of three detached bungalows of similar design and scale, which are set back from the road with parking and small garden areas in front. The steeply pitched roof designs reduce the massing of these dwellings at first floor level, emphasising the gaps between them at height.
5. To the opposite side of the appeal site there is a row of rendered two-storey semi-detached dwellings that are set back significantly from the road, beyond the rear elevation of No 44. The front gardens tend to be open with low boundary treatments. The appeal site therefore reads as a transitional space between two cohesive, suburban style housing developments.
6. In this part of Cause End Road, there is a more spacious character. This is due to typically greater gaps between dwellings, the staggered arrangement of

properties and, that dwellings tend to be set back from the road. The rear gardens however are not particularly prominent within this part of the street scene, and so the depth of plots does not contribute to the spacious character of this location either way.

7. The proposed dwelling would fill much of the narrow space to the side of No 44. It would not meet the minimum distances to the side boundaries, as set out in the Design Code N3 of Residential Extensions, New Dwellings and Small Infill Developments (2000), Supplementary Design Guidance (RENSID), of at least 1.5m to one boundary and 1m to the other side boundary.
8. The proportions of the new dwelling would be smaller and notably narrower than No 44. To the front elevation it would have only one ground floor window, a front door and one pitch roof dormer window in the front roof slope. The gap between No 44 and the dwelling, particularly at roof level, would be smaller than other characteristic gaps between properties in this part of the road. The design and siting of the proposed dwelling therefore would create a squeezed-in appearance to the proposal, which would be at odds with the pattern of other properties in the immediate area.
9. The amount of amenity space and the overall density of the proposed dwelling would be comparably smaller than that typically found in the immediate area. Additionally, No 44 would lose a large proportion of its garden space to accommodate the proposed dwelling, resulting in a plot to build ratio lower than that generally found here. This would result in the overdevelopment of the site, contrary to the grain and character of the area.
10. The driveway parking area serving the proposed dwelling would occupy most of its frontage, leaving little space for any planting. Also, the amount of lawn and planting in front of No 44 would be reduced to accommodate parking. The extensive areas of hardstanding would create a harsh appearance to the property frontages, and spaciousness would be further reduced by the tight row of parked cars. This would, furthermore, be at odds with the general form and character of other dwellings in this part of the road.
11. The fact that neighbouring properties, Nos 42, and 40 Cause End Road are significantly set back from the road, would not reduce the cramped feel of the proposed development. Indeed, it would compound it, as, from certain angles, the proposed dwelling would appear to step in front of No 46's principal elevation in a way that would be awkward and contrived.
12. In view of the above, the proposed dwelling would have an unacceptable effect on the character and appearance of the surrounding area. The development would therefore be contrary to Policies 28S, 29 and 30 of the Bedford Local Plan (BLP), Policies W1 and W2 of the Wootton Neighbourhood Plan (WNP) and guidance contained in criteria N3 of Part 2 of the Bedford RENSID. These policies seek to ensure, amongst other things, that development is in keeping with the character and appearance of the surrounding area. Furthermore, Policy 30 of the BLP and criteria N3 of the RENSID seek to avoid cramped and over-developed forms of development.

Highway safety

13. Separate vehicular access and parking arrangements are proposed for No 44 and the new dwelling. This would include additional dropped kerbs along Cause

End Road and the 4 parking spaces, two spaces perpendicular in front of each dwelling. There would be no turning space within the properties, so vehicles would need to reverse on/off the driveway to access the parking spaces. Notably, there are no on-street parking restrictions in the vicinity of the site.

14. Details regarding parking space dimensions and restrictions and/or solutions to the parking provision for the existing and proposed dwellings have been provided and debated by the parties. Yet, even if the scheme were to modestly increase street parking in the vicinity, there is no substantial evidence as to why this would necessarily lead to a less safe highway environment.
15. In view of the above, I accordingly find the proposed development would not have an adverse effect on highway safety, due to the on-site parking provision. Therefore, there is no demonstrated conflict with Policy 31 of the BLP, Policies W8 and W12 of the WNP and the criteria within the PSCDGP and criteria N4 of the RENSID, which require new development, amongst other matters, to have adequate on-site parking provision that meet the relevant Council standards. Also, as there would be no adverse effect on highway safety, there would be no conflict with para 111 of the Framework.

Other Matters

16. Whilst the appeal site is within Wootton, which is identified as a Key Service Centre in the settlement hierarchy for the Borough, this does not weigh significantly against the harm caused to the character and appearance of the area.

Conclusion

17. The harm that would arise to the character and appearance of the area brings the proposal into conflict with the development plan read as a whole and, there are no material considerations that indicate the decision should be made other than in accordance with the development plan.
18. Accordingly, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

C Billings
INSPECTOR