



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 24 November 2023

by Alexander O'Doherty LLB (Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 14 December 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/W3330/W/23/3317204

40 Woodland Road, Watchet, Somerset TA23 0HH

- 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 Martin Sadler against the decision of Somerset Council.
- The application Ref 3/37/22/017, dated 12 November 2022, was refused by notice dated 11 January 2023.
- The development proposed is erection of a detached dwelling with parking and gardens.

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matter

2. The appeal was submitted against the decision of Somerset West and Taunton Council. Somerset Council has now taken over the functions of Somerset West and Taunton Council. Somerset Council has therefore been named in the banner header, above.

Main Issue

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

Reasons

4. The appeal site comprises an area of residential garden land and hard surfaced areas associated with 40 Woodland Road (No 40) in a residential area in Watchet. No 40 is a 2-storey semi-detached dwelling. Woodland Road in the vicinity of the site has a broadly symmetrical pattern, with semi-detached dwellings being the predominant form of development along each side of the road.
5. The proposed development would introduce a 2-storey detached dwelling within the site. Its scale would be similar to No 40 and it would be positioned at a median height between No 40 and 42 Woodland Road (No 42).
6. As a detached dwelling in this location, it would interrupt the clear pattern of development referred to above. Moreover, the proposed new dwelling, which would be sat higher than No 40, would be sited adjacent to the pathway between No 40 and No 42, meaning that its incongruity in the street scene would be particularly evident in this prominent location. Furthermore, the proposed new dwelling would largely fill the space to the side of No 40, which currently positively contributes to the spacious character of residential development in the area.

7. Therefore, whilst the proposed materials, hipped roof, and window proportions of the proposed new dwelling would not appear out-of-place in this location, the combination of the adverse impacts mentioned above would result in a development that would undermine the character and appearance of the area.
8. I observed all of the dwellings referred to by the appellant. Whilst these dwellings constitute infilling, their visual effect on the street scene is mitigated by the fact that they are all part of a long and near-continuous run of properties. In contrast, the proposed new dwelling would, as mentioned above, be situated in a corner location, and separated from the area of 2-storey dwellings further to the west on Woodland Road, meaning that its incongruity in the street scene would be evident. Hence, the occurrence of infill development in the vicinity does not change my findings on this main issue.
9. I therefore find that the proposed development would have an unacceptable and harmful effect on the character and appearance of the area. It would conflict with Policy NH13 of the West Somerset Local Plan to 2032 (adopted 2016) which provides that, amongst other things, all proposals for new development should demonstrate that the proposal makes a positive contribution to the local environment and creates a place with a distinctive character.
10. The proposed development would also conflict with paragraph 130 c) of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) which provides that, amongst other things, planning decisions should ensure that developments are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities).

Other Matters and Planning Balance

11. The Council did not refuse the application on matters relating to flood risk, highway safety, sustainable transport, parking, or the living conditions of the occupiers of nearby dwellings. However, even if I were to likewise reason that the proposed development would be in compliance with the development plan and the Framework in these respects, these would be neutral factors rather than ones which weigh positively in favour of the proposed development.
12. The proposed development would support the Government's objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes, and it would support the local economy by providing work for construction professionals. Additionally, the future occupiers of the proposed new dwelling would likely contribute to both the local economy and the community life of the area.
13. Nevertheless, considering that the Framework provides at paragraph 126 that, amongst other things, the creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve, as a matter of planning judgement I find that the other considerations in this case do not, either individually or collectively, outweigh the harm identified on the main issue above, nor the conflict with the development plan when considered as a whole.

Conclusion

14. For the reasons given above, having considered the development plan as a whole, the approach in the Framework, and all other relevant material considerations, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Alexander O'Doherty

INSPECTOR