



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 24 January 2024

by Elizabeth Lawrence BTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 09.02.2024

Appeal Ref: APP/P1425/W/23/3321816

7 Anchor Field, Ringmer, Lewes, BN8 5QN

- 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 Reuben Barker against the decision of Lewes District Council.
 - The application Ref LW/22/0238, dated 5 April 2022, was refused by notice dated 25 January 2023.
 - The development proposed is described as planning application for extension to existing dwelling and two new attached dwellings.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary matters

2. The Council's decision notice refers to policies 9.1 and 9.2 of the Ringmer Local Plan. This is clearly an error as elsewhere in the decision notice and within the delegated report the document is referred to as the Ringmer Neighbourhood Plan. The appeal has been determined on this basis.
3. The appellant has submitted various revised drawings, a bat survey and drainage strategy with their appeal documentation. Further revisions are also shown within the appellants appeal statement. Other than the wider street scenes which show the scheme upon which the council made its decision, I am unable to take the additional revised drawings statements into account. This is because they have not been formally considered by the council and where appropriate their consultees. Thus, in the interests of openness and fairness this decision is based solely upon the drawings listed in the council's decision notice and the associated additional street scenes, which have been provided for information purposes only.

Main Issues

4. The first main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the street scene. The second main issue is whether the proposed new dwellings would provide satisfactory living conditions for their occupiers with particular regard to internal space and garden areas.

Reasons

5. The appeal site is located within a long-established housing estate within the built up area of Ringmer. The estate is characterised by traditionally designed

semi-detached and short terraces of two storey dwellings from a limited palette of designs and materials. The terraces typically have projecting front gable features at either end, with recessed catslide wing projections to the side. The semi-detached dwellings typically have fully hipped plain tiled roofs. The front elevations are constructed from brick at ground floor level with a mixture of brick, render or tiling at first floor level.

6. The dwellings occupy varied sized plots, with the more recent development in Danforth Way having noticeably smaller rear gardens. The design of this development is slightly more varied, but includes gable and hip roof detailing.
7. The appeal dwelling comprises an end of terrace house with a projecting gable and recessed catslide roof to the side. There is no on-site parking and the deep side and front gardens appear unused and are fenced off from the rear garden, which is triangular in shape. It is noted that planning permission has been granted for an attached four-bedroom dwelling on the site, which would be located in the same location as the proposal.
8. Collectively and amongst other things Policies CP2 & CP11 of the Lewes District Local Plan Part 1: Joint Core Strategy (CS) and Policy DM25 of the Lewes District Local Plan Part 2: Site allocations and development management policies (DMP), seek to secure high quality design, which respects and where appropriate positively contributes to the character and distinctiveness of the built environment. New development should respond sympathetically to the characteristics of the site and adequate consideration should be given to the gaps around buildings. Policy 9.1 of the Ringmer Neighbourhood Plan (RNP), similarly requires new development to fit in with its surroundings, taking account of the design detailing, and spatial, visual and historic context of the surrounding development.
9. Together, CS Policy CP2 and RNP Policy 9.2 seek to meet identified housing needs and states that there will generally be a need to include one-and-two-bedroom dwellings. Development should reflect the site context, along with the size and type of dwellings needed in the locality and achieve densities in the region of 47–57 dwellings per hectare (dph) in towns and 20–30 dph in villages. However higher densities may be permitted depending on the site's context.

Character and appearance

10. With the proposal the western elevation of the resultant building would be very similar to that of the approved scheme. By adhering to the ridge line of the host dwelling, the proposal would better reflect the proportions and appearance of the host terrace. However, on the south elevation the proposed narrow frontage of the main two storey element coupled with the spacing of the fenestration would fail to respect the strong horizontal lines and uniformity of the adjacent pair of semi-detached dwellings.
11. Of more concern is the recessed one and half storey side wing. Its mono-pitched roof attached to the main gable would appear contrived and totally out of character with the rest of the building and the street scene. Its impact would be exacerbated by the positioning of the first-floor front window, which would look particularly cramped and out of alignment with the ground floor window. Similarly on the east elevation the continuation of the mono-pitched roof between the two rear facing gables would appear awkward and

- unbalanced. Its relationship with the shallow mono-pitched roof of the proposed extension to the rear of No.7 would similarly appear awkward and poorly proportioned.
12. Overall, the harm that the form, proportions, design and appearance of the southern and upper eastern elevations of the proposed extension would cause to the character and appearance of the street scene would be significant. It would materially outweigh the benefits of providing two additional modest sized dwellings within this established residential area. Further, due to the nature of these concerns it is not something that could be satisfactorily addressed through the imposition of conditions.
 13. Regarding the intensity of the proposal, the council has confirmed that the proposed development would equate to a density of 38 dph, which would exceed the range set out in CS Policy CP2 and RNP Policy 9.2. However, as advised in CS CP2 the density figures set out in the CS represent anticipated average densities, whilst still allowing for higher densities where individual circumstances merit them, such as the character and local context of the site.
 14. In this instance, the density of the surrounding development is varied and the resultant building lines would respect the prevailing front building lines in the immediate area. Whilst the rear gardens to No. 7 and the proposed one-bedroom dwelling would be small, they would not be visible from the street scene and there would be a generous sized gap between the east facing elevations of these dwellings and the adjacent dwelling at 5 Anchor Field. The proposed gardens fronting the Anchor Field would be spacious and would accommodate on-site parking. Finally, the footprint of the resultant building would be comparable to that of the approved attached dwelling and the number of bedrooms on the overall site would be three, as opposed to the approved scheme which would have four.
 15. In these respects, I find that the proposal would blend in with the character and appearance of the street scene and the area in general. However, this does not outweigh the harm that would be caused due to the form, proportions, design and appearance of the proposed south and east elevations.
 16. I conclude on the first main issue that the proposal would unacceptably harm the character and appearance of the street scene. It would conflict with DMP policy DM25, CS Policies CP2 & CP11 and RNP Policy 9.1.

Living conditions

17. Regarding garden sizes, no minimum space standards have been referred to by the main parties. Whilst the resultant rear garden to No.7 would be irregular in shape and modest in size, it would continue to receive good levels of sunlight and would be satisfactory for a two-bedroom dwelling. The proposal would also benefit from a deep, west facing front garden.
18. The garden to serve the one-bedroom dwelling would similarly be irregular in shape and would be small. However, it would be private and would have a favourable southerly and easterly aspect. There would be room allocated within the front garden for refuse bins and a garden shed for cycles, etc, along with an on-site parking space. Having regard to the fact that the garden would serve a very modest sized one-bedroom dwelling, the amount of private and other garden area would be satisfactory.

19. Finally, regarding internal living conditions, as pointed out by the council the proposed two-bedroom house would fail to comply with the Nationally prescribed space standards. The situation would not be helped by the poor internal ground floor layout. For this reason the proposed dwelling would provide unsatisfactory living conditions for a two-bedroom family dwelling.
20. The ground floor layout for the one-bedroom dwelling would similarly be poor and would appear unduly cramped. Having regard to the small size of the garden that would serve the one-bedroom house, it would be important to ensure the internal space provided was to a good standard. The proposal fails to do this.
21. In view of the importance of providing good living conditions, it is a matter that should be dealt with at the application stage and not left to be dealt with by condition.
22. For these reasons I conclude on the second main issue that the proposed scheme would fail to provide satisfactory living conditions for the proposed one-and-two-bedroom dwellings, due to the size and layout of their ground floor layouts.

Other matters

23. The council has stated that the proposed on-site parking for the two additional dwellings is compatible with the County parking standards. On street parking is unrestricted and could cater for visitors. I have no reason to disagree with this view and at the time of the appeal site visit there were numerous on-street parking spaces available within Anchor Field. In addition, the proposal includes secure cycle storage for the proposed dwellings.
24. I am satisfied that matters relating to drainage and ecology could be satisfactorily dealt with by condition. Due to the distance and juxtaposition between them, the proposed extensions would not result in an unacceptable loss of light within the dwelling at No.5.
25. A need for small homes is identified in the Development Plan and section 5 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2023 seeks to boost the supply of housing. It advises that small and medium sized sites can make an important contribution to meeting the housing requirements of an area and that the development of windfall sites should be supported.
26. The council has already granted planning permission for a new attached dwelling on the appeal site. Whilst the proposal would better meet the stated need for smaller and thus more affordable homes, this should be balanced with the need to provide good quality living conditions and to protect the character and appearance of established residential areas. In this instance, the harm identified regarding living conditions and visual impact would clearly outweigh the benefits of providing two small, accessible and energy efficient dwellings on the site in place of one larger dwelling.

Conclusion

27. Whilst I have found in favour of the appellant in relation to some matters, the overall conclusions on the two main issues represent compelling reasons for dismissing this appeal.

Elizabeth Lawrence

INSPECTOR