

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 3 April 2024

by R C Shrimplin MA(Cantab) DipArch RIBA FRTPI FCI Arb MCIL

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 22nd May 2024

Appeal Reference: APP/C1570/W/23/3326444

Land adjacent to 'Hill Haven', Canfield Road, High Roding, Essex CM6 1NJ

- 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. T. Kennelly against the decision of Uttlesford District Council.
 - The application (reference UTT/23/0740/OP, dated 15 March 2023) was refused by notice dated 15 May 2023.
 - The development proposed is described in the application form as a residential development of three new dwellings.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary points

2. The application is made in outline, with all matters reserved.

Main issue

3. The main issue to be determined in this appeal is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the surroundings, in the context of planning policies for the area.

Reasons

4. High Roding is a loose-knit village in the Essex countryside, having grown up mainly along the Dunmow Road (the B184), which is a through route running approximately north to south. Canfield Road is a country road, branching off the main road, towards the west, with a small group of dwellings on its northern frontage. These are mainly concentrated near the junction with Dunmow Road, with an open area between this group and other properties further to the west. This more open area includes the appeal site and an area that appears to be associated with 'Hill Haven'.
5. The appeal site is described on a name post as "Adjacent to Hill Haven" and it comprises a roughly rectangular area of land. The site was mainly open in appearance at the time of the site visit, although it was occupied by a caravan and a container and there appeared to be some limited open storage of materials (as seen from the roadside).

6. It is now proposed to construct three houses on the appeal site. Drawings have been submitted that show three bungalows, designed in a traditional style, but these are only illustrative drawings, since the application was made in outline, with all matters reserved (as noted above).
7. The 'National Planning Policy Framework' emphasises the aim of promoting sustainable development and it acknowledges the importance of the natural and local environment, recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, among other things. It also has the more general aim of "achieving well designed places" in the broadest sense (notably at Section 12), while making effective use of land and encouraging economic activity.
8. The Uttlesford Local Plan was formally adopted as long ago as January 2005 but it underpins the aims of promoting sustainable development and protecting the countryside. Policies in the Local Plan that have been formally "saved" are relevant to the appeal, including Policy S7 (which is concerned with the countryside) and Policy GEN1 (which encourages "movement by means other than driving a car", among other things).
9. The proposed development would comprise three substantial dwellings and would consolidate sporadic development on the northern frontage of this part of Canfield Road. It has been argued that the development would not have an adverse impact on the openness and character of the countryside nor lead to the urbanisation of this rural area but I have formed the opinion that the proposals would harm the character and appearance of the surroundings, nonetheless. The proposed scheme would create a more continuous ribbon of buildings along this frontage and, although the site does not have an open agricultural character it does not have the appearance of a closely developed site at present (as it would if the three proposed dwellings were to be built).
10. Hence, I have concluded that the proposal would add very markedly to development on this part of the road frontage and that it would erode the essentially rural character of the immediate setting, consolidating existing sporadic development. Thus, it would have a harmful effect on the character and appearance of the surroundings and it would conflict with national and local planning policies that are intended to protect the countryside.
11. On the other hand, of course, planning policies do support sustainable development. In this case, it has been pointed out that the appeal site would be accessible to some degree, although local services are rather limited. Various services and facilities in the locality would be accessible by walking or cycling and there is a wide network of footpaths available for recreational use. Buses routed along the main road (B184) provide connections to the City of Chelmsford and the town of Great Dunmow, which both provide a wide range of services and other opportunities.
12. Even so, I accept that the occupants of the new dwellings would rely heavily on the use of motor cars and I am not persuaded that the proposed new homes could realistically be described as "sustainable" in planning policy terms. I am convinced, therefore, that the scheme would also conflict with planning policies that are intended to promote sustainable development.
13. I have noted that the Officer's Report on the planning application recorded a failure by the Council to meet the housing land supply target for the District,

although the appeal submissions assert that this has now been achieved. In any case, however, I am conscious that three new dwellings would make only a very small contribution to the need for new houses and I have formed the view that the benefits of the project, including the benefit of providing the new homes, are clearly and decisively outweighed by the objections that have been identified.

14. In short, the appeal site lies outside any defined settlement boundary and the proposed development would not be sustainable in planning terms. It would have an adverse impact on the character and appearance of the surroundings. The contribution that the appeal scheme would make to the provision of residential accommodation in the locality weighs in favour of the appeal but, nevertheless, I am convinced that proposed development would conflict with both local and national planning policies and that the objections which I have identified outweigh the benefits of the project.
15. Hence, I have concluded that the scheme before me ought not to be allowed and, although I have considered all the matters that have been raised in the representations, I have found nothing to cause me to alter my decision.

Roger C. Shrimplin

INSPECTOR