



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 18 June 2024

by E Dade BA (Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 8th July 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/H0520/W/24/3338224

2 Queens Court, Eaton Socon, Cambridgeshire PE19 8BZ

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by AJB Home & Utilities Ltd against the decision of Huntingdonshire District Council.
 - The application Ref is 23/00774/FUL.
 - The development proposed is erection of two x two-bedroom homes and associated works.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues in this appeal are:
 - The effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the area; and
 - Whether the proposed development would provide adequate living conditions, with particular regard to the provision of refuse bins.

Reasons

Character and appearance

3. The appeal site is located next to the junction of Queens Court and Queens Gardens and comprises the side garden of the appeal property. Queens Court is a cul-de-sac and Queens Gardens provides a route through the estate and serves a nearby shopping parade. The site is therefore prominently located, visible within the street scene of both Queens Gardens and Queens Court.
4. The site is within a residential area consisting of predominantly mid-twentieth century, two-storey, terraced and semi-detached dwellings. No 2 is typical of dwellings in the area which generally have a simple form, constructed of brick with a pitched, tiled roof. Some dwellings have been extended and altered, and a new dwelling has been constructed on the opposite side of Queens Court. However, the area has a generally uniform appearance and layout with consistent building lines.
5. Dwellings are set back from the highway by front gardens. The host dwelling is set back substantially from Queens Gardens by its side garden. This spacious layout is broadly replicated on the opposite side of Queens Gardens, and the

- road junction is flanked by grass verges. The site therefore contributes to the area's spacious, suburban character.
6. The siting of the proposed pair of semi-detached dwellings in the side garden would reduce the set back of built form from the highway edge. The proposal would therefore appear visually prominent and would erode the open character of the street scene of both Queens Gardens and Queens Court.
 7. The dwellings would be oriented to face Queens Court to prevent overlooking and to provide a continuation of development along this street. However, the dwellings would project significantly forward of the established building line of dwellings at Queens Gardens. Through their siting, the proposed dwellings would appear dominant within the street scene and incongruous with the form and layout of development in the area.
 8. The proposal would retain existing screening and provide additional planting along boundaries to retain privacy for neighbours. The rear garden at plot 1 would be enclosed by a tall close-boarded fence, which would appear prominent from Queens Gardens and further erode the site's open character. An existing access to the highway of Queens Gardens would be utilised to provide a parking space behind the plot 1 dwelling. Consequently, the rear garden would be small and out of keeping with the area's spacious character.
 9. The plot 1 dwelling would be sited on a corner. The Huntingdonshire Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document 2017 (SPD) advises buildings satisfactorily address the corner, such as through siting the main entrance and habitable room windows in the gable thus creating activity, and with greater presence and height than neighbouring buildings. I note the proposal followed a process of assessment, involvement, evaluation, and design. However, aside from two small windows, the side elevation of the plot 1 dwelling would appear blank and featureless. The design therefore fails to respond sensitively to its setting and is unsympathetic to the character of the area.
 10. The proposed dwellings would have a simple semi-detached form, would utilise sympathetic materials of appropriate colours and textures, and would include design features such as chimneys and brick eaves to reflect the appearance of surrounding dwellings. However, certain prominent features of surrounding dwellings have not been incorporated into the design, such as ground floor bay windows and door canopies, further limiting the extent to which the proposed dwellings would assimilate with existing development.
 11. Vehicle parking in the area includes a mix of driveways, occasional garages, and on-street parking in the carriageway or within parking bays. The frontage of the plot 2 dwelling would serve as parking space for two vehicles, and the front garden to no 2 has consent for two parking spaces. No apparent boundary treatment would be provided between the dwelling frontages. The parking areas would therefore appear dominated by parked vehicles, thus adversely impact on the appearance of the street scene.
 12. Whilst Policy LP7 of the Huntingdonshire Local Plan 2019 (LP) supports residential development within the built area. However, for the reasons set out above, the proposal would harm the character and appearance of the area.
 13. The proposal would therefore conflict with LP Policies LP11 and LP12 which together require proposals apply the guidance contained in the Huntingdonshire

Design Guide SPD, draw inspiration from key characteristics of its surroundings, contribute positively to the area's character and identity, successfully integrate with adjoining buildings and spaces between buildings, and minimise the dominance of car parking. In addition, the proposal would conflict with Policy A3 of the St Neots Neighbourhood Plan 2016 which requires development be designed to a high quality that reinforces local distinctiveness, guided by landscape, layout, and relationship to back of pavement.

14. The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) suggests proposals should not be refused where they promote high levels of sustainability because of concerns about incompatibility with existing townscape, if those concerns have been mitigated by good design. However, the proposal would fail to satisfy paragraph 135 of the Framework which requires proposals be visually attractive as a result of layout and be sympathetic to local character including the surrounding built environment. Paragraph 139 is clear that development that is not well designed should be refused, especially where it fails to reflect local design policies and government guidance on design.

Living conditions – refuse bins

15. The appellant has provided a completed Unilateral Undertaking (UU) containing a planning obligation to secure a financial contribution toward the provision of wheeled bins, in accordance with the Council's Developer Contributions Supplementary Planning Document 2011. I am satisfied the planning obligation is necessary to secure the provision of refuse bins.
16. The proposal would provide adequate living conditions for future occupants, with regard to the provision of refuse bins. The proposal would therefore comply with LP Policy LP4 which requires proposals contribute toward the provision of infrastructure, including waste recycling facilities.

Other Matters

17. A two-storey dwelling has recently been constructed to the south of the site. The dwelling is situated between two terraced rows, extending one row of terraced dwellings, and occupies a less visually prominent position than the appeal site. The dwelling's form and layout differ significantly from the proposal. The visual impacts of the recently constructed dwelling are materially different from, and thus do not justify, the appeal proposal.

Conclusion

18. As set out above, the proposed development would be located within the built area and would provide suitable living conditions through the provision of wheeled refuse bins secured by a planning obligation. However, the proposal would harm the character and appearance of the area.
19. The proposal would conflict with the development plan taken as a whole, and there are no other considerations which outweigh this finding. Therefore, for the reasons given the appeal should be dismissed.

E Dade

INSPECTOR