

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 22 August 2024

by C Butcher BSc MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 20th September 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/P2114/W/23/3330743

Land adjacent to 74 Alvington Road, Carisbrooke PO30 5AR

- 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 Mr & Mrs Marsh against the decision of Isle of Wight Council.
 - The application Ref is 23/00701/FUL.
 - The development proposed is three detached dwellings, formation of vehicular access and parking/turning areas.
-

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are: (i) the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the area; and (ii) whether the proposed mix of dwelling types is appropriate.

Reasons

Character and Appearance

3. The appeal site is an agricultural field that is situated at the end of existing residential development on Alvington Road. There are some allotments on the north side of the road, while the two houses at the end, adjacent to the site, are set slightly further back than the others. However, despite this, the existing built form does have a reasonably uniform rhythm before it ends very abruptly where the road turns into an unsurfaced public footpath with fields either side.
4. Where it does so, there is a very stark contrast between urbanism and rurality, partly as a result of the mature hedgerows and trees that are situated between the appeal site and the existing dwellings. Indeed, when standing on the appeal site it seems clear that it has a much stronger relationship with the agricultural fields that extend away from Carisbrooke than with the urban form along Alvington Road.
5. Due to the topography of the land, I acknowledge that the appeal site is more secluded than the field immediately opposite to the south of the footpath. However, while the proposed development may not be visible as part of

longer-range views, it would still be entirely obvious when seen from close range. Because of the existing mature planting on the eastern boundary of the site, and the amount of space between the proposed dwellings and the existing homes on Alvington Road, the development would seem separate and somewhat isolated in visual terms, thus disrupting the current rhythm of the urban form in this area.

6. Furthermore, because the development would breach the existing stark boundary between the urban form and the rural fields beyond, it would inevitably be seen as a contrived and obvious incursion into the countryside, thereby greatly eroding the more rural character of the immediate surroundings. The increased feeling of urbanism would be enhanced by the need to convert part of the unsurfaced footpath to a road, as well as the removal of part of the existing hedgerow to provide an access point. Therefore, when considered as a whole, I find that the harm caused would be significant and enduring.
7. The appellant has sought to draw my attention to development that has recently taken place at the end of Alvington Manor View, to the north of the appeal site. I do not have the full details of that development before me, and each proposal must be considered on its individual merits. However, that development does not seem directly comparable to the appeal proposal because it appears to have a much closer relationship with existing development on Arthur Moody Drive.
8. I also note that the appeal site is located adjacent to the Medina Valley Key Regeneration Area. However, Policy SP1 of the Island Plan Core Strategy, March 2012 (CS), states that proposals for development on non-previously developed land in such areas will need to clearly demonstrate how it will enhance the character of the area. I have set out why that would not be the case in this instance. The appellant has also referenced the inclusion of the appeal site within the Council's Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) in 2018. While development on the site was considered to be 'deliverable' at that stage, the SHLAA is a technical document that examines the theoretical feasibility of providing housing on sites for the purposes of plan making, and the document carries very little weight in terms of this appeal.
9. I therefore conclude that the proposed development would result in harm to character and appearance. As such, it would conflict with Policies SP1, SP5, DM2 and DM12 of the Island Plan Core Strategy, 2012 (CS), the relevant aspects of which seek to ensure that new development is well designed and that it preserves character and appearance and the quality of the natural environment.

Housing Mix

10. The Council commissioned a Housing Needs Assessment in 2018 (HNA) which identified that the appeal site is located within the Medina Valley – West sub-market area. It set out that there was a need for 5% of dwellings to be one-bedroom, 40% to be two bedrooms, 42% to be three bedrooms, and 14% to be four plus bedrooms. An update to the HNA in 2022 was not based on sub-market areas, but still provided a broadly similar assessment of need.

11. The proposed development would provide three houses that comprise two, three and four bedrooms respectively. As such, on the face of it, there would be a mix of housing type that would generally reflect the needs set out within the HMA's.
12. However, the approved plans show that the two-bedroom dwelling would also have a staircase that would lead to a first-floor area, and that this would contain two further storage rooms. Each of the two rooms would be a separate space with rooflights, and it is clear that these could be used as additional bedrooms without the need for further internal works. If considered as a four-bedroom dwelling, the mix of units would not adequately reflect the needs set out within the two HMA's.
13. I note that the appellant has submitted a revised drawing as part of their appeal statement which removes the staircase, storage areas and rooflights. However, the revised layout would represent a fairly significant material change to the proposed development and I have therefore elected to disregard it as part of this appeal.
14. I therefore conclude that the proposed development would not provide an appropriate mix of housing. As such, it would conflict with CS Policies DM2 and DM3, which in part require development proposals to reflect the most recent HMA while also responding to the social policy context of the area.

Other Matters

15. I note that a planning obligation has been provided as part of this appeal in order to deliver a financial contribution towards affordable housing and to mitigate the impact of the proposed development on protected environmental areas. However, as I am dismissing this appeal, I am not required to consider this matter further.

Conclusion

16. It is not in dispute that the Council cannot currently demonstrate a sufficient record of housing delivery and I have no evidence before me to suggest that this position is likely to improve in the short-term. As a result of the shortfall, policies related to the location and supply of housing are deemed to be out of date. In such circumstances, Paragraph 11d and footnote 8 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) require that permission should be granted unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the Framework as a whole.
17. In this instance, the benefits of the proposal include the provision of three new homes that would assist in meeting need in the area, support for local facilities, and the creation of jobs during the construction phase. There would also be some additional landscaping and the potential for ecological enhancements, a financial contribution towards affordable housing and possible improvements to the public footpath by upgrading it to a bridleway. However, while the deficit in recent housing completions means that enhanced weight can be given to these benefits, they are still only limited in breadth and scope overall given that the proposed development is relatively minor in nature. I do not afford weight to the potential for an additional turning area

on Alvington Road as this would further exacerbate the harm to character and appearance.

18. I have concluded that there would be material harm to the character and appearance of the area and that the proposal would not provide an adequate mix of housing types. The support for the principle of development within the Framework is countered by the importance it places on the provision of development that preserves character and appearance while also providing an appropriate mix of housing types for the local community. In this instance, the harm would be significant and enduring. As a result, when assessed against the policies in the Framework taken as a whole, the adverse impacts would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits. For the avoidance of doubt, even if I had not found harm in relation to housing mix, the harm to character and appearance alone would have led to the same outcome.
19. Consequently, for the reasons given, the proposed development conflicts with the development plan as a whole, and there are no other considerations, including the provisions of the Framework, that outweigh the identified harm. The appeal is therefore dismissed.

C Butcher

INSPECTOR