



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 4 April 2025

By S. Hartley BA (Hons) Dist.TP (Manc) DMS MRTPI MRICS

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 08 April 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/V0510/W/24/3356893

12 Swaffham Road, Burwell, Cambridgeshire, CB25 0AN

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended).
 - The appeal is made by Mr and Mrs M Smith against East Cambridgeshire District Council.
 - The application Ref is 24/00366/FUL
 - The development proposed is the demolition of single garage, construction of two semi-detached bungalows and associated works.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matters

2. The National Planning Policy Framework was revised in December 2024 and amended on 7 February 2025 to correct cross references from footnotes 7 and 8, and to amend the end of the first sentence of paragraph 155 to make its intent clear. The 2025 Framework (the Framework) has not materially changed in terms of the identified main issues below and therefore, it has not been necessary for me to seek comments from the main parties.

Main Issue

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

Reasons

4. It is proposed to demolish a single storey garage to the side of the existing bungalow to facilitate the erection of a pair of semi-detached bungalows in part of the existing rear garden.
5. While there is not a common building line along this part of Swaffham Road, the street is nonetheless characterised by having dwellinghouses which are set within very spacious plots and where there is a general absence of back land development (i.e., one dwelling behind another). Some of the dwellinghouses in this part of Swaffham Road are either set well back from the road, and hence have spacious front amenity spaces, and others are set closer to the road, and hence have spacious back gardens. This spacious pattern of development, and the existence of mainly bungalows in this part of Swaffham Road, adds positively and distinctively to the overall character and appearance of the area.
6. In the context of the above, the two semi-detached dwellinghouses would take up a significant proportion of the rear garden area of No. 2 Swaffham Road. While the

resultant garden sizes, separation distances, car parking provision and building materials would all be acceptable, I nonetheless find that the resultant development would depart unacceptably from the spacious pattern that exists in respect of most of the residential plots in the area. In this regard, the back land development would fail to suitably reflect the local context and therefore, there would be conflict with the Council's Design Guide SPD 2012 (SPD) which states that *'back land development (one dwelling built behind another) will only be acceptable if supported by a contextual analysis of the locality'*.

7. In my judgement, the development would appear squeezed and cramped within the existing residential plot and hence would not assimilate well within the prevailing pattern of development in the locality. If such development were to be approved, I find that it would set an undesirable precedent in this area and the Council would then find it hard to resist similar proposals elsewhere in the locality.
8. In addition to the above, there would be conflict with the Council's SPD in so far that the evidence is that all the building plots would not be *'approximately 300 square metres'*.
9. For the above reasons, I find that the proposal would not constitute good design. Significant harm would be caused to the character and appearance of the area. Therefore, the proposal would not accord with the design, character and appearance requirements of policies ENV1, ENV2 and HOU2 of the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan, 2015, the Council's SPD, chapter 12 of the Framework, and the National Design Guide.

Other Considerations

10. The proposal would deliver some economic benefits in terms of supporting existing facilities, services and amenities in the area. Moreover, there would be some construction employment benefits, albeit that such benefits would be relatively short-lived.
11. The two dwellings would add to the supply of homes in the area. This therefore weighs in favour of allowing the appeal. However, there is no evidence before me to suggest that the Council cannot demonstrate a five-year supply of housing sites. Hence, there does not appear to be a very urgent need to release further land for housing. Indeed, the appellant states that the *'Council have a land supply'*.
12. Reference has been made by the appellant to the existence of back land developments elsewhere. I have considered this proposal based upon the character and appearance of the immediate area. The existence of back land developments elsewhere, including that at No. 38 Swaffham Road, does not justify the harm that would be caused to the prevailing character and appearance of the locality in which the proposed development would be positioned.

Planning Balance and Conclusion

13. The proposal would result in significant harm being caused to the character and appearance of the area. While there would be some social and economic benefits associated with the erection of the pair of semi-detached dwellinghouses, such benefits would not alter or outweigh the harm that would be caused to the character and appearance of the area.

14. The development would not accord with the development plan for the area when considered as a whole and I therefore conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

S. Hartley

INSPECTOR