
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 6 May 2025

by L Francis BA (Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 23rd May 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/J1535/W/24/3355819

Rosedene, Oak Hill Road, Stapleford Abbots, Romford, Essex RM4 1JJ

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant outline planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mr S Ahmed against the decision of Epping Forest District Council.
 - The application Ref is EPF/1805/24.
 - The development proposed is “new built”.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Applications for costs

2. An application for costs was made by Mr S Ahmed against Epping Forest District Council and against Stapleford Abbots Parish Council. This application is the subject of a separate decision.

Preliminary Matters

3. The proposed scheme is for all matters reserved, including access. The submitted drawings show a detailed scheme in relation to the layout, appearance and scale of the proposed dwelling. However, as it is clear from the application form that these matters would be reserved, I have treated the drawings as illustrative only. Nevertheless, they show a way in which the site could be developed.
4. The description of development is taken from the planning application form. Whilst the description was altered by the Council to reflect the detail shown in the submitted plans, I do not have any confirmation before me that the appellant accepted the revised description of development.
5. The appellant submitted revised drawings to the council before the application was determined. Planning Practice Guidance (Making an application, paragraph 061, Reference ID: 14-061-20140306 - revision date 06 03 2014) indicates that whilst it is possible for an applicant to suggest changes to an application, it is at the discretion of the local planning authority whether to accept such changes. Notwithstanding that the application was submitted as an outline with all matters reserved, the Council have confirmed that the application was determined on the basis of the drawings originally submitted and I have dealt with the appeal on that basis.

Main Issue

6. The main issue is the effect of the appeal proposal on the mix of housing types within the District.

Reasons

7. Epping Forest District Local Plan 2011-2033 Part One adopted 2023 (Local Plan) Policy H1(E) states that the Council will resist the loss of bungalows and specialist accommodation. This is delivered with the aim of ensuring that the supply of homes within the District meets local needs, including housing for people with accessibility requirements and older persons. The supporting text to the policy clarifies that bungalows can play an important role because of their potential ease of adaptation such that they can provide choice for people with accessibility requirements. The Council indicate that their stock of bungalows has been gradually eroded, and the evidence from their Strategic Housing Market Assessment shows that over the plan period, the District's population profile is ageing.
8. The appeal site is occupied by a single storey dwelling with parking for vehicles in the front forecourt. All accommodation including three bedrooms, living and washing facilities is on a single level. Although there is a step up to the front door from the parking area, and the plot size is large, there is no reason to consider these factors would present significant barriers to its occupation by older persons or those requiring single storey or accessible accommodation. I accept that future occupiers may need to modernise the dwelling, but there is no substantive evidence before me that this could not be done whilst retaining it as a bungalow.
9. Although the layout, appearance and scale are not detailed matters before me, the drawings nevertheless provide a reasonable indication of how the site is intended to be developed. Irrespective of the detailed design, scale and layout which would fall to be agreed under reserved matters submissions, the scheme would result in the loss of the existing bungalow with no guarantee that the replacement building would be a bungalow.
10. The appellant confirms that the indicative layout could easily accommodate a lift. I have no reason to doubt that a lift would be capable of being accommodated given the proposal comprises a replacement dwelling. However, as the application was made in outline, matters of detailed layout are not before me for consideration.
11. I accept that the existing bungalow may not meet the needs of larger or multi-generational families. However, Local Plan Policy H1 is clear that across the District, there is a need for a mix of accommodation sizes and types, including bungalows, and that the supply of bungalows within the overall housing stock has already been eroded. Whilst the scale of loss would be small, such incremental losses can cumulatively become significant.
12. In conclusion on this main issue therefore, the loss of the bungalow would be harmful to the mix of housing in the District. This would conflict with Local Plan Policy H1 insofar as it seeks to resist the loss of bungalows which could otherwise meet the needs of older people and those with accessibility requirements. The proposal would also conflict with the aims of the National Planning Policy Framework in delivering an appropriate mix of housing types for the local community.

Other Matters

13. The appellant indicates that since the previously refused planning application there have been amendments to the detailed elevational design and layout of the dwelling shown in the submitted drawings. The appearance, layout and scale are not matters before me for determination and do not therefore weigh in favour of the scheme.

14. I have been referred to the site at Fairway, Oak Hill Road, where the Council recently granted planning permission¹ for the demolition of a chalet bungalow and its replacement with a chalet bungalow with its living accommodation in the roof space. The Council state that the planning permission did not involve the loss of a bungalow since they considered it was being replaced by a similar form of chalet style bungalow. Whilst that may be the case, the proposal before me is in outline, and the detailed design is not a matter for consideration. I do not consider the circumstances are sufficiently similar to the site at Fairway for me to come to a different conclusion regarding the loss of the bungalow at the appeal site.
15. Reference has also been made to a similar application which was allowed at appeal, although no reference number or address has been provided. As such, I have not been able to consider this evidence in my decision.
16. The Council have indicated that the proposal would be acceptable with regard to the proposed access and highway safety. I have no reason to disagree with this assessment. Nevertheless, the absence of harm means these are neutral considerations in my determination of the appeal.

Planning Balance and Conclusion

17. The replacement of the existing bungalow would bring some temporary and permanent socio-economic benefits through construction employment and the use of local services and facilities by future residents of the dwelling. There would be some environmental benefits through improvements in energy efficiency and insulation; the indicative plans also show that there would be adequate space for a lift. A replacement dwelling on this site would potentially make more efficient use of the land through greater building density on site, but this is not certain as the application is in outline. These benefits attract limited weight due to the small scale of development proposed which would not increase the housing stock.
18. Whilst my attention is necessarily focussed upon the planning merits of the scheme before me, I acknowledge the appellant's personal circumstances and need for a dwelling suitable for multi-generational use, and I attach some, albeit limited, weight to these circumstances in the overall planning balance.
19. Nevertheless, the proposal would involve the loss of an existing bungalow, a form of accommodation which is protected by the development plan. The Framework also expects that housing should meet the needs of different groups in the community, and Local Plan Policy H1 is delivered with the aim of meeting local needs. The benefits identified do not outweigh the harm to the mix of the Council's housing stock.
20. The material considerations do not indicate that a decision should be made other than in accordance with the development plan. For the reasons given above, the appeal should be dismissed.

L Francis

INSPECTOR

¹ Reference EPF/1269/24