
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 2 December 2024

by J Pearce MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 19 December 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/X1925/W/24/3342621

64 Pondcroft Road, Knebworth, Hertfordshire SG3 6DE

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant permission in principle.
 - The appeal is made by Mr Brian Retkin against the decision of North Hertfordshire District Council.
 - The application Ref is 23/02198/PIP.
 - The development proposed is the demolition of existing residential bungalow and outbuildings and new residential build of 2 detached and 2 semi-detached houses with gardens and on-site parking.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and permission in principle is granted for residential development comprising a minimum of four and a maximum of four dwellings at 64 Pondcroft Road, Knebworth, Hertfordshire SG3 6DE in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref 23/02198/PIP.

Applications for costs

2. An application for costs was made by Mr Brian Retkin against North Hertfordshire District Council. This application is the subject of a separate decision.

Preliminary Matters

3. The proposal is for permission in principle. The Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) advises that this is an alternative way of obtaining planning permission for housing-led development. The permission in principle consent route has two stages: the first stage (or permission in principle stage) establishes whether a site is suitable in principle, and the second stage (technical details consent (TDC)) is when the detailed proposals are assessed. This appeal relates to the first of these two stages.
4. The scope of the considerations for permission in principle is limited to location, land use and the amount of development permitted. All other matters are considered as part of a subsequent TDC application, if permission in principle is granted. A sketch layout plan is included to demonstrate how the site might be developed. I have treated this information as illustrative.
5. The revised National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) was published on 12 December 2024 and is a material consideration in planning decisions. The parts of the Framework most relevant to the appeal have not substantively changed from the previous version. As a result, I consider that there is no requirement for me to seek further submissions in respect of these

matters, and I am satisfied that no party's interests would be prejudiced by taking this approach.

Main Issue

6. The main issue is whether the site is suitable for proposed development, having regard to its location, the proposed land use and the amount of development.

Reasons

7. The appeal site is located within the village boundary of Knebworth. Policy SP1 of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011 (LP) seeks to maintain the role of key settlements within and adjoining the District as the main focus for housing. Policy SP2 identifies that the village of Knebworth will assist in delivering housing over the plan period.
8. The site is within Pondcroft Road, a primarily residential street with a mix of semi-detached and detached dwellings. Development in the area is diverse but includes single-storey and two-storey dwellings arranged in a linear pattern fronting the road. Plot widths in Pondcroft Road are varied and there is typically limited spacing between buildings. The site consists of an existing bungalow, which occupies most of the width of the site.
9. The proposal is for four dwellings following the demolition of the existing bungalow. Although a layout plan has been submitted, the precise layout, type and scale of the proposed development would be a matter for consideration at the TDC stage. I acknowledge the Council's concerns in respect of the indicative layout and that it would not reflect the prevailing pattern of development in the area. Nonetheless, the layout of the proposal would fall to be properly considered as part of the TDC stage.
10. The site is considerably wider than many other properties in Pondcroft Road. Given the tight grain of development within the road, including the varied and often-narrow plot widths, the site could accommodate the amount of development proposed whilst avoiding harm to the character and appearance of the area. Moreover, the site could incorporate a layout that would not harm the living conditions of occupants of neighbouring dwellings and provide suitable living conditions for future occupants of the proposal. Nevertheless, the precise details would fall to be properly considered as part of the TDC stage.
11. I conclude that the site is suitable for the proposed development, having regard to its location, the proposed land use and the amount of development. The proposal therefore does not conflict with Policies SP1, SP9 and D1 of the LP and Policies KBDS1, KBDS2, KBBE1 and KBBE4 of the Knebworth Neighbourhood Plan 2022, which collectively support new development where it is well design and located and responds positively to its local context, respect and enhance the special the special character of Knebworth village, have densities that respect existing properties and the character of surrounding areas and address current and future housing needs.

Other Matters

12. Several local residents have objected to the proposal. While I have had regard to these comments, I have already set out that a permission in principle is not

a planning permission in itself and my consideration of the case is limited to very specific matters. As such, issues such as pressure on infrastructure, parking and detailed access arrangements among other things, must be considered at the subsequent TDC stage. There can be no guarantee that just because the permission in principle has been granted, that approval for the TDC will follow as it is the approval of both stages for a planning permission to be secured.

Conditions

13. As set out within the PPG, it is not possible for conditions to be attached to a grant of permission in principle.

Conclusion

14. The proposal accords with the development plan as a whole. Material considerations do not indicate that a decision should be made other than in accordance with it. For the reasons given above the appeal should be allowed.

J Pearce

INSPECTOR