
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 30 September 2025

by **N Bowden BA(Hons) Dip TP MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 24 OCTOBER 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/X1925/W/25/3369632

Trees, Gosmore Road, Hitchin, Hertfordshire SG4 9AN

- 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 Matthew Judge (Judge & Sons Building Services Ltd) against the decision of North Herts Council.
 - The application Ref is 25/00423/FP.
 - The development proposed is the construction of 3no detached dwellings with garages following demolition of existing house and outbuildings.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are:
 - 1) the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the area, and
 - 2) the effect of the proposed development on the living conditions of neighbours having particular regard to overlooking and visual impact upon number 8 Coach Drive.

Reasons

Character and appearance

3. The appeal site is formed of an existing, substantially proportioned detached home constructed in an Arts and Crafts vernacular featuring rendered walls with casement windows under a tiled roof with notable prominent chimneys. It occupies a large corner plot which tapers to a fairly sharp corner on the junction between Gosmore Road and Coach Drive.
4. The area in the locality is formed of predominantly detached houses, many in a similar Arts and Crafts style and within a sylvan setting. Homes typically address the street with ample front gardens and driveways. This is most typical towards the east and south along Coach Drive, Lister Avenue and Priory Way where the regular pattern of development, albeit with individually distinct homes, contributes to a comforting, tree lined setting. This character dissolves to the north where more recent and comprehensive development has introduced some rather uninspiring red brick homes within smaller plots. These homes do not readily address the surrounding streets and feature limited detailing and landscaping.

5. The proposal appears to take design cues from this notably less appealing layout to the north whilst simultaneously disregarding the pleasing arrangement of properties to the south and east. The density of the scheme, whilst not high in its own right, would mark a step change in the impression of the area, especially on this verdant corner plot. The proposed dwellings would largely shun any street elevations to Gosmore Road or Coach Drive. This is apparent due to plots 2 and 3 presenting side or rear elevations to the surrounding roads and all three being clustered around a small courtyard style cul-de-sac. The proposal would create an insular form of development that contributes little, if anything, to the street scene. Whilst the design of the homes are acceptable in their own right, they have been shoehorned into this sensitive corner site with scant regard for their context.
6. The overall contributing factors of size, scale and positioning means that the proposal would be detrimental to the character and appearance of the area and contrary to policy D1 of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031 (NHLP) and National Planning Policy Framework in that it would not enhance the public realm.

Living conditions

7. Number 8 Coach Drive is set back from the road with its private garden and amenity area being located at the front of the property. The proposed plots 1 and 2 would be arranged with their rear walls facing number 8. The plots are stated to be between 8.2 and 10.5 metres away from the boundary with this property and I have no reason to disagree with this assessment.
8. This separation distance is sufficient to ensure that the proposed dwellings would not appear overbearing. However, the first-floor rear facing windows would have direct vantage towards the private garden area and facing windows of number 8 in close proximity and this would result in a loss of privacy to the occupants of 8 Coach Drive. This is notwithstanding boundary screening or the opportunity to obscure glaze some of the windows. This overlooking would have an adverse effect on the living conditions of the occupants of number 8 Coach Drive and is thus contrary to policy D3 of the NHLP.

Other Matters

9. Whilst I appreciate that the appellant considers that the proposal followed pre-application advice, I have not been provided the full details of this which is undertaken by the Council on a without prejudice basis, and, in any case the appeal must be determined on its merits as it has been presented to me.

Planning Balance and Conclusion

10. The Council accepts that it cannot demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing land and therefore the provisions of 11 d) ii. of the Framework are engaged. This means granting permission unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits including securing well-designed places.
11. I have found that the proposal would be detrimental to the character and appearance of the area in addition to having an adverse effect on the living conditions of neighbours. Whilst there would be a modest benefit in providing a net increase of two new dwellings, one of which would be Self or Custom Housebuilding, this does not outweigh the significant harms that I have identified.

12. The proposal conflicts with the development plan and the material considerations do not indicate that the appeal should be decided other than in accordance with it. The appeal is dismissed.

N Bowden

INSPECTOR