



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 13 August 2019

by David Wallis Bsc (HONS) PG DipEP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 19 September 2019

Appeal Ref: APP/X1925/W/19/3230072

28 Ermine Close, Royston SG8 5EE

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mr Milano Mile against the decision of North Hertfordshire District Council.
 - The application Ref 19/00750/FP, dated 29 March 2019, was refused by notice dated 21 May 2019.
 - The development proposed is the erection of two storey, two-bedroom semi-detached dwelling and two parking spaces, with all associated landscaping and ancillary works.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue for the appeal is the effect of the development upon the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

3. Ermine Close is of estate design. The layout generally comprises rows of terraces receded from the highway, with modest front gardens and landscaping providing a green margin between the facades and the public realm. The dwellings on the southern side of Ermine Close, albeit at an angle to the highway, maintain these spatial qualities. Although not subject to any designation or protection for its characteristics, the estate pattern and rhythm of properties together with the prominence of vegetation are key features providing a pleasant environment and a sense of place typical of the era.
4. The appeal site is central to this context. It sits on the junction between Ermine Close and Kingsway, and features in numerous viewpoints around said junction. It defines the entrance to Ermine Close and contributes to the wider setting of the estate.
5. The appeal development would fill the gap between the flank of No 28 Ermine Close and its southern boundary, leaving only a small amount of space to the edge of the public highway. The result would be a two-storey principal elevation in much closer proximity to the highway than nearby dwellings. This would conflict with the spatial characteristics of the estate.

6. When passing the proposed dwelling on its southern side, the prominence of the elevation would be stark and overbearing. This is not assisted by the erection of a fence along the length of the southern boundary. Whilst I note from the plans an intention to retain existing hedgerows and trees, I observed no such retention on my visit. There is little room between the fence and the edge of the highway for any landscaping to take place. The result is an urban form of development completely at odds with the spacious green character of the area.
7. Whilst not directly impacting upon a single individual, the dwelling would appear conspicuous in its many public views, drawing attention for its incongruous nature. The dwelling would be dominant as a result. Rather than add to the visual diversity and interest of the street scene, the proposal would be harmful to and incompatible with the character of the area.
8. I acknowledge that modifications have been made to the appeal proposals following concerns raised in a previously withdrawn appeal. These alterations may enable the proposals to emulate the architectural design of nearby dwellings but have not addressed the spatial discordance of the proposals to any significant degree. I give very little weight is given to the benefits of these reductions.
9. I conclude that the proposals would be harmful to the character and appearance of the area. This is contrary to policies 26 and 57 of the North Hertfordshire District Local Plan No 2 with Alterations 1996. These policies, amongst other things, require development to take the opportunity available for improving the character and quality of an area. The proposal is also contrary to emerging policy D1 of the Local Plan 2011 – 2031, which seeks similar design objectives. I attach moderate weight to this policy given the advanced preparation of the emerging Local Plan.

Other Matters

10. The Local Planning Authority acknowledge that a five-year housing land supply cannot be demonstrated. Thus, the tilted balance is invoked Paragraph 11(d) of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) is engaged.
11. The site is within an urban area that is accessible to shops and services. Whilst windfall sites are important to boost the supply of housing, the benefits of one additional dwelling to the housing stock and local economy are modest. Consequently, the support generated from the development towards social infrastructure is also modest. However, the proposal would cause environmental harm to the qualities of the locality.
12. My attention is drawn to a development within a different Local Authority, as an example of an acceptable, yet highly visible, scheme. I am not aware of the circumstances or considerations related to the scheme. Nonetheless, the setting and context for that development is not directly comparable with the current appeal site and I give very little weight accordingly.

Conclusion

13. The proposal would cause harm to the character and appearance of the street scene and the wider area, contrary to the Development Plan. Whilst it would provide a new dwelling contributing to housing supply within the District, the adverse impact would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits.

14. I dismiss the appeal accordingly.

David Wallis

INSPECTOR