



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 17 July 2017

by Chris Forrett BSc(Hons) DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government

Decision date: 18th August 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/Q0505/W/17/3171375

19-21 Godesdone Road, Cambridge, Cambridgeshire CB5 8HR

- 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 Carlton Homes (Cambridge) Ltd against the decision of Cambridge City Council.
 - The application Ref 16/1002/FUL, dated 26 May 2016, was refused by notice dated 10 February 2017.
 - The development proposed is the erection of a residential development containing seven units (one 2xbed flat and six 1xbed flats) including bin and cycle storage, following the demolition of the existing buildings on the site.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matter

2. During the course of the consideration of the application by the Council, the proposed development was amended and these amendments also changed the number and type of residential units proposed. The Council determined the application on the basis of those amended plans and this amended description is reflected on the Appellants Appeal form. I have therefore determined the appeal on this basis.

Main Issues

3. The main issues are the effect of the development on the character and appearance of the area, the living conditions of the future occupiers of the development with particular regard to the level of external amenity space, and the provision of cycle parking facilities.

Reasons

Character and appearance

4. The appeal site is located on the western side of Godesdone Road which slopes downwards from Newmarket Road (A1134). Godesdone Road and Beche Road are generally characterised by two storey terraced properties which are of a traditional design and appearance. Opposite the appeal site is a more modern development, which is of a similar scale to the more historic dwellings. The appeal site currently contains a single storey commercial building with a wide gable roof facing Godesdone Road, with a smaller element set back from the road frontage.

5. The site is also located within the Central Conservation Area¹. Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires me to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the character or appearance of the Conservation Area.
6. The proposed development would result in a substantial new building in the streetscene which would be higher than 17 Godesdone Road to the south of the site despite the fall in land levels. The proposed building would also be substantially higher than the properties on Beche Road that adjoin the site.
7. Whilst I acknowledge that in the vicinity of the site there are a mixture of building heights (including the Travelodge hotel on Newmarket Road and a two and a half storey building on the opposite side of Godesdone Road at the corner of Beche Road) the proposed two and a half storey development would nevertheless appear overly dominant in the streetscene as a result of its excessive height. The impact of the proposed building is also exacerbated by the dormer windows on its front elevation which add to its bulk and massing.
8. Turning to the design of the building, elements of this clearly take cue from the surrounding development and the use of timber cladding would reflect the site past. However, the lean to element appears as a much more modern design than the main part of the building and would not reflect the local character of the area. This would appear as an incongruous addition to the streetscene and the character of the Conservation Area.
9. The rear aspect of the development includes a chamfered edge at first and second floor levels to ensure that the amenity of the occupiers of No 17 would not be adversely affected. The rear elevation also includes a large dormer window with a shallow pitched roof. Whilst the chamfered element would not give rise to any harm to the character or appearance of the Conservation Area owing to its limited visibility, it would nevertheless represent a contrived design. The dormer window also adds further bulk and massing to the building and together with its shallow roof pitch (when compared to the front dormers and the main roof pitch) also appears as an alien element to the overall appearance of the development. In coming to those views, I acknowledge that views of these elements would be limited, and therefore the harm arising would not be significant.
10. The Council have also referred to the size of the exposed gable wall which would face the rear of the Beche Road properties and would be visible in the streetscene. I consider that the main element of harm which arises from this exposed element is in relation to its excessive overall height as a large proportion of the end of the main part of the building would be shielded by the lean to element.
11. Paragraph 134 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) states that where a development would lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal. The redevelopment of this brownfield site could be considered to be a benefit as would the provision of much needed new housing. However, whilst the harm to the significance of the heritage asset would be less than substantial, the public benefits are not sufficient to outweigh this harm.

¹ The Council have also referred to the site being in the Riverside and Stourbridge Common Conservation Area

12. For the above reasons, I conclude that the development would harm the character and appearance of the area and the character of the Conservation Area. Therefore the development would conflict with Policies 3/4, 3/7, 3/12 and 4/11 of the Cambridge Local Plan (2006) (LP) which amongst other things seek to ensure that development does not affect the setting of Conservation Areas and that development responds to the context of the surrounding area.

Living conditions

13. The Council's reason for refusal refers to Policies 3/7 and 3/12 of the LP. However, neither of these policies are particularly relevant to the consideration of whether the proposal provides adequate external amenity space for the future occupants of the development. Therefore I give these policies little weight. Notwithstanding that, the design aims of the Framework seek to ensure that new development is high quality including private spaces.
14. The development proposes a two bedroom flat and a one bedroom flat on the ground floor, with a further 5 No one bedroom flats on the upper floors. There is an amenity area for the occupants of the ground floor accommodation to the rear of the building. However, there is no provision for any of the flats located on the upper floors.
15. Given the limited size of some of these flats (particularly flats 4, 6 and 7) the lack of external amenity space would give rise to an overall poor standard of living conditions for the future occupiers of these dwellings.
16. In coming to that view, I acknowledge that there are areas of public open space such as Logan's Meadow, Midsummer Common, Stourbridge Common, Barnwell Lake and St Matthews Piece are all within easy walking distance of the site. I also acknowledge that the Framework requires Councils to deliver a wide choice of homes, including urban living where large garden areas would not necessarily be required. However, this does not outweigh the harm I have found.
17. For the above reasons, I conclude that the proposal would not give rise to suitable living conditions for all of the future occupiers of the development. Therefore the proposal would be at odds with the Framework which seeks to secure good design including quality private spaces.
18. I have also had regard to the concerns raised in the representations from the consultation periods on the application and appeal processes. Matters raised included the loss of sunlight and daylight, and outlook from habitable room windows of adjoining properties.
19. From the evidence before me, the proposed development would inevitably have some impact in terms of daylight, sunlight and outlook to neighbouring residential properties. Whilst the proposed building would be larger than the existing buildings, given the juxtaposition between the existing dwellings and the proposed development, I consider that the impact to the surrounding dwellings, and in particular 68 and 70 Beche Road, would not be so significant as to warrant the withholding of planning permission.

Cycle parking

20. The Council acknowledge that the level of cycle parking provision would be adequate for the future occupiers of the development. However, concern is

raised that the proposal does not include details of any lighting or how the cycle storage areas would be secured. Additionally, concern is raised over the route to access to storage area as it would be via the communal lobby and through two doors.

21. The submitted ground floor plan indicates the location of the secure cycle hoops, but is unclear whether these would be covered or not. However, given the space available for the cycle parking facilities, further details on the storage facilities could easily be secured via a suitably worded planning condition.
22. I have also had regard to the route from the street to the cycle parking provision through the communal entrance/lobby. Notwithstanding the guidance in the Cycle Parking Guide for New Residential Development (which the Council acknowledge is no a Supplementary Planning Document and cannot be afforded significant weight), given the width of the lobby and the easy route to the cycle parking facilities, the proposal would provide for a high standard of cycle parking provision.
23. For the above reasons, the proposal would accord with Policy 3/12 of the LP which amongst other things seek to ensure that adequate provision is made for cycle storage.

Other matters

24. I have also had regard to the concerns raised in respect of drainage and parking provision. Matters relating to drainage, and in particular whether there is sufficient capacity in the existing system, would be dealt with by the local drainage body.
25. In respect of parking provision, I noted at my site visit that there is restricted parking on street. However, given that the site is located in a built up area with a range of facilities within easy walking distance, future residents of the development would not be dependent on private cars for access to goods and services. Whilst I have no doubt that parking demand in the area is high, I am not convinced that the development would lead to parking issues which would amount to a significant highway safety or amenity issue.

Conclusion

26. Taking all matters into consideration, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Chris Forrett

INSPECTOR