



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 3 June 2008

by Louise Crosby MA MRTPI

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

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Decision date:
27 June 2008

Appeal Ref: APP/H0738/A/08/2069128

Land to the rear of Thorntree Farm, Bassleton Lane, Thornaby, Stockton-on-Tees, Cleveland, TS17 0LD

- 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 T S Howson against the decision of Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council.
- The application Ref: 07/3337/FUL, dated 27 November 2007 by notice dated 22 January 2008.
- The development proposed is erection of 5 bungalows with associated garaging/parking.

Decision

1. I dismiss the appeal.

Procedural Matter

2. I am aware that Thorntree Farm is currently in use as offices (use class B1), but that the temporary planning permission for the change of use expired in March 2008, and therefore the current lawful planning use is as a dwelling house.

Main Issues

3. I consider that the main issues in this case are the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the surrounding area and on highway safety along Bassleton Lane.

Reasons

4. I saw that the appeal site is garden curtilage to 93 Bassleton Lane, and can also be accessed via a field gate from the proposed access, off Bassleton Lane.

Character and Appearance of the Surrounding Area

5. The appeal site juts out beyond the southern, built-up limits of Thornaby. Although the proposed bungalows have been designed to ensure that they would impact as little as possible on the surrounding area, their roofs, at least, would be clearly visible above the existing 2 metre high boundary wall, when viewed from outside the site. While the existing wall has introduced built development into this otherwise open area, it is only 2 metres in height and inside the garden is open, with no buildings.

6. Moreover, the proposed bungalows would all have large footprints, particularly plots 1 and 2, which are attached. I consider that the scale and mass of the bungalows, even taking into account the hipped roofs, would appear large and at odds with the open and rural character of the Bassleton Beck area which bounds the site on three sides. As such, the proposal would, in my opinion, conflict with LP Policies GP1, HO3 and HO11, in so far as they require development to be sympathetic and in keeping with its surroundings.
7. The stated purpose in the LP of designated green wedges, such as the one within which the appeal site is located, is to maintain the separation of communities within built up areas and improve its appearance. It advises that appropriate uses in such areas are those which require only limited built development.
8. I consider that the appeal proposal would result in significant built development being brought closer to Ingleby Barwick, a residential settlement south west of the site, thereby eroding the designated green wedge and undermining its intended purpose. In my opinion, the proposal would seriously detract from the open nature of the landscape within the green wedge and the local identity and setting of the settlements that it separates. The development would therefore conflict with the provisions of LP Policy EN14.

Highway Safety

9. I appreciate that the proposal would provide less car parking than advised in the Stockton-on-Tees Supplementary Planning Document – *Parking Provision for New Developments* (SPD), one of the aims of which is to prevent uncontrolled on-street parking. Despite the proposal not strictly complying with the SPD, however, I am also bound to take account of government guidance in Planning Policy Guidance note 13: *Transport* (PPG13). One of PPG13's stated objectives is "to use parking policies, alongside other planning and transport measures, to promote sustainable transport choices and reduce reliance on the car for work and other journeys". It goes on to state that local planning authorities, in promoting sustainable transport choices, should not require developers to provide more spaces than they themselves wish, other than in exceptional circumstances, for example, where there might be significant implications for road safety.
10. I consider that in this case sufficient parking would be provided to avoid the need for on-street parking, but not so much that the development would become car dominated and encourage reliance on the car. No exceptional circumstances are put forward to justify a higher level of provision. Nor am I provided with the criterion by which the SPD would be applied flexibly (paragraph 7.1 of the SPD – "Departure from Standards"). Thus I conclude that, based on the information before me, the level of car parking proposed in this urban location would accord with PPG13 and would not conflict with the SPD's intention that its standards should be applied flexibly.
11. The width of the access road off Bassleton Lane is somewhat restricted at the present time, as a result of parking in relation to the current, time expired and now, presumably, unlawful office use at Thorntree Farm. The road, if not parked upon, could accommodate in most parts two lanes of traffic. Insofar as the proposal is criticised as being served by a cul-de-sac of excessive length,

because the access road is straight before it joins Bassleton Lane good visibility is available in both directions, and the sharp corner into the site from the access road would slow traffic down.

12. In my opinion, the proposal would comply with LP Policy GP1 which seeks to ensure that, among other things, proposals for development provide satisfactory access and parking arrangements and would accord with the spirit of both the SPD and PPG13.

Conclusions

13. In conclusion, I find that the proposal would not be detrimental to highway safety, but that it would have a seriously harmful effect on the open character and appearance of the Bassleton Beck area and undermine the purpose of the designated green wedge.
14. I am aware that a submission has been made to the Council in relation to the emerging Local Development Framework (LDF), requesting that the appeal site be removed from the green wedge allocation. However, the LDF process has yet to be concluded and therefore I must determine the appeal on the basis of the designation in the current adopted Local Plan.
15. I also appreciate that a number of the adjacent dwellings are built within the designated green wedge. However, they do not protrude into the open Bassleton Beck area in the same way that the appeal proposal would. I have dealt with this appeal on its own merits.
16. For the reasons given above and having regard to all other matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Louise Crosby

Inspector