
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 27 April 2015

by Martin Andrews MA(Planning) BSc(Econ) DipTP & DipTP(Dist) MRTPI

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

Decision date: 1 June 2015

Appeal Ref: APP/R3325/W/15/3003540

Land adjoining Keepers Cottage, Ham Lane, Compton Dundon, Somerset TA11 6PQ

- 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 Gary Linham against the decision of South Somerset District Council.
 - The application, Ref. 14/05001/FUL, dated 27 October 2014, was refused by notice dated 16 December 2014.
 - The development proposed is the erection of a new 2 bedroom house.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matter

2. Since the appeal was lodged the Council has adopted the South Somerset Local Plan (2006-2028). However this has not significantly altered the planning policy considerations in this appeal.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

4. Compton Dundon is primarily a linear settlement with its dwellings strung out in ribbon development along local roads, in particular Compton Street and Ham Lane. In refusing the application the Council considers that the proposed dwelling would effectively compromise the integrity an important visual gap in the frontage of Ham Lane, with a significant loss in its visual and environmental value.
 5. In this context I saw on my visit that although the appeal site has been severed from the garden of Keeper's Cottage, the length of that garden stretching eastward along the southern side of Ham Lane is such that the site is effectively isolated from this building, as well as from the dwellings to its west which extend to the junction with Hurst Drove. There is also a gap between the site and the
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first of the dwellings to the east, which marks the edge of the more concentrated area of development of the village centre.

6. At present the landscape quality, the rural character of the gap and its pleasing openness is spoiled only by the bulky village hall and post office with its large car park. However the infilling of the gap in the ribbon development on the south side of Ham Lane by a dwelling with no obvious relationship to any existing built form would be to the further detriment of those qualities and attributes that the Council is anxious to safeguard and are protected in Policy EQ2 of the South Somerset Local Plan (2006-2028) which has similar objectives to the saved policies of the previous Local Plan as cited in the Notice of Refusal.
7. The Council is critical of the Dutch Barn design style and the unusual external 'Green' materials, not least because it would make the property more distinctive and increase the perception of an unwelcome intrusion in the landscape. However I am not entirely convinced by this argument and consider that some credit is due for the innovative approach, which in principle is encouraged by the National Planning Policy Framework ('the Framework').
8. However with that said, the proposed dwelling would appear somewhat contrived on an almost impossibly narrow site that is uncharacteristic of most of the development to the east and west on either sides of the gap. The drastic pruning of the hedge has already caused harm and even if this is allowed to grow back to a point where it offers a screen without interfering with the dwelling's light and external circulation space, the building would appear inappropriately squeezed in to its site in front of a deep ditch and hard up against the lane.
9. Furthermore, quite apart from the harm to the landscape and the gap that this would cause, a house on the site would make it difficult for the Council to reasonably resist one or more dwellings on much of the remaining area of garden of Keeper's Cottage, thereby increasing the adverse effect.
10. For the above reasons I conclude the appeal scheme would have an unacceptably harmful effect on the character and appearance of the area. This would be in conflict with the above-mentioned Local Plan Policy EQ2 and the requirement in the Framework to maintain local distinctiveness and landscape quality.
11. I have taken account of all matters raised, including the proposed energy efficiency of the dwelling and local support for more low cost housing in the village. However these matters do not alter my conclusion that I should dismiss the appeal, especially as the low cost housing would not technically be 'affordable housing' and therefore in a form that would meet the requirements of Local Plan Policy SS2 and the Framework.

Martin Andrews

INSPECTOR