
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 25 October 2016

by Rory Cridland LLB (Hons)

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

Decision date: 18 November 2016

Appeal Ref: APP/R3325/W/16/3155862

Trays Farm, Compton Street, Compton Dundon, Somerset TA11 6PS

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant outline planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by GW & RJ Napper against the decision of South Somerset District Council.
 - The application Ref 15/04738/OUT, dated 20 October 2015, was refused by notice dated 4 March 2016.
 - The development proposed is two dwellings for renting only.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary matters

2. The application was submitted in outline, with matters relating to appearance, landscaping and layout reserved. I have dealt with the appeal on that basis, treating all plans as illustrative, except where they deal with matters of access and scale.
3. The description of development in the heading above has been taken from the planning application form. However, in Part E of the appeal form it is stated that the description of development has not changed but, nevertheless, a different wording has been entered. Neither of the main parties has provided written confirmation that a revised description of development has been agreed. Accordingly, I have used the one given on the original application

Main Issue

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

Reasons

5. Policy EQ2 of the South Somerset Local Plan (2006 – 2028)¹ (LP) seeks to ensure that new development is of high quality design which promotes local distinctiveness and preserves or enhances the character and appearance of the district. In assessing proposals the Council will consider a number of criteria. This includes whether the proposals conserve or enhance the landscape character of the area and whether they reinforce local distinctiveness and respect local context.

¹ Adopted March 2015

6. The appeal site is located outside the village of Compton Dundon, in what is essentially open countryside. It forms part of a larger agricultural field which provides separation from the main village and acts as a buffer between the village edge and the more isolated properties to the north. These properties are set apart from the main village and appear unrelated to the wider village or its overall character.
7. The proposed dwellings would similarly be set apart from the main village, with the remainder of the field continuing to provide a considerable amount of separation from the village edge. This would appear at odds with the established pattern of development and would impact negatively on local distinctiveness and context. Furthermore, it would jar with the more rural character of this part of the landscape, failing to reinforce local distinctiveness and negatively impacting on the wider landscape. While I note that development in any village will always have some impact, I consider the effect of the proposal on the surrounding area to be such that it would materially harm the overall character and appearance of the surrounding area.
8. Consequently, I find that the proposal would be harmful to the character of the surrounding area and would fail to reinforce its local distinctiveness. As such, it would be contrary to LP Policy EQ2.

Other matters

9. I have noted the letters of support from local residents submitted during the application stage. While I note their concerns regarding the lack of affordable homes and rental properties in the village, they do not overcome the harm to the character and appearance of the surrounding area which would result from the development proposed.
10. The National Planning Policy Framework states that if a five year supply of deliverable housing sites cannot be demonstrated, relevant policies for the supply of housing should not be considered up to date. However, Policy EQ2 is not such a policy and as such, I consider that Paragraphs 49 and 14 are not engaged. In any event, although there are a number of identifiable benefits to the scheme, the greatest of which would be its contribution to the overall housing supply, they are generally modest and are significantly and demonstrably outweighed by the harm identified above.

Conclusion

11. For the reasons set out above, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Rory Cridland

INSPECTOR