Planning Inspectorate

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 16 June 2025

by Chris Couper BA (Hons) DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 23 June 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/X1925/W/25/3362928
10 St Katherines Close, Ickleford, Hertfordshire SG5 3XS

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant planning permission.
- The appeal is made by Mr Parm Basra against the decision of North Hertfordshire District Council.
- The application Ref is 24/02752/FP.
- The proposed development is described as the erection of one self-build detached 3 bed bungalow with associated parking and landscaping.

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are the effect of the proposed development on:

   - the character and appearance of the area; and
   - the living conditions of neighbouring occupiers, with particular regard to the outlook from 8 and 12 St Katherines Close ('Nos 8 and 12').

Reasons

Character and appearance

3. The properties on St Katherines Close are predominantly arranged in short two storey terraces, typically with long rear gardens, but with a scattering of other building types, including a semi-detached pair at Nos 21 and 23, and bungalows at Nos 2 to 8 (evens). The dwellings are set back a short distance from the road, behind gardens or forecourts, with their front face addressing it. Whilst Nos 2 and 4 are set back further from the carriageway, their context is rather different given that they are close to, and face, an area of public amenity land on the corner with Greenfield Avenue.

4. The proposed bungalow would be sited towards the end of the host property's long, undeveloped rear garden. In that backland location, with another house between it and the road, it would be markedly at odds with the local grain and spatial pattern of development; and it would be set back even further from St Katherines Close compared to Nos 2 and 4. The subdivision of this plot would give both properties a cramped appearance, with relatively small gardens. The scheme's incongruous siting and cramped appearance would be clearly visible from nearby properties, and in streetscene views through the gap between Nos 8 and 10.

5. My attention has been drawn to approved development elsewhere on St Katherines Close, including an attached dwelling which would align with the front face of Nos 21 and 23 (Ref: 22/02765/FP), and a small, one bed bungalow which would replace an outbuilding to the rear of the corner plot at No 19 (Ref: 21/00457/FP). However, they are on a narrow section of the road, some distance, and around a corner, from this site, where the streetscene is different, and where there are a few other dwellings on relatively small plots. Moreover, unlike the scheme before me, there would be no house between the principal elevation of those examples and the road.

6. For the above reasons, notwithstanding the use of appropriate facing materials, along with landscaping and fences which provide a degree of screening, the scheme would significantly harm the character and appearance of the area. It would thereby conflict with Policies SP9 and D1 of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011 - 2031 ('NHLP'). Amongst other things, and in general terms, these require development to be well designed and located, and to respond positively to the site's local context.

Living conditions.

7. The scheme would be single storey, with a hipped roof and an 'L' shaped layout, which would assist in breaking up its mass and limiting its overall bulk. However, it would span most of the plot width such that its side walls would be only around a minimum of 1 metre from the boundaries with Nos 8 and 12.

8. Whilst there are sheds, greenhouses and similar incidental structures in some nearby rear gardens, this development, with a footprint of roughly 100sqm, and a maximum height of about 5.28 metres, would be much larger than them. As a result of its siting and its scale, the proposed bungalow would appear overbearing viewed from those neighbouring properties' rear gardens.

9. In the context of this area, where the residents could reasonably expect a relatively spacious and uninterrupted rear outlook, the scheme would have a significant and harmfully adverse impact on the living conditions at Nos 8 and 12, and it would thereby conflict with NHLP Policy D3.

Other considerations

10. I have limited evidence to indicate whether there is a particular demand for the type of single storey accommodation proposed. Notwithstanding the description of the proposal, as I have not been provided with a mechanism to ensure that it would be a 'self-build' project, I have attached very little weight to that claimed benefit.

11. In its favour, the scheme would make efficient use of a large plot to deliver a new dwelling within the settlement boundary of a village which has a range of services and amenities that the occupants may use and help to support, and which is identified in the NHLP as a location for higher levels of housing growth. There would also be economic benefits during construction. Given the scheme's modest scale, these benefits, which also find support from the National Planning Policy Framework 2024 ('Framework'), carry limited weight in its favour.

12. The Council is unable to demonstrate a five-year supply of housing land, as required by the Framework. As the proposal would make a modest contribution of one unit to its housing supply, I attach moderate weight to this benefit.

Planning Balance and Conclusion

13. The Framework does not change the statutory status of the development plan as the starting point for decision making. Its paragraph 232 sets out that due weight should be given to existing policies according to their degree of consistency with the Framework. In this case, the proposal would conflict with NHLP Policies D1, D3 and SP9, which are consistent with the Framework insofar as they reflect its requirements in Section 12 for good design which is sympathetic to local character and which provides a high standard of amenity. I therefore attach significant weight to those policies.

14. However, given that the Council cannot demonstrate a five year supply of deliverable housing sites, those development plan policies which are most important for determining the application are deemed to be out of date, and Framework paragraph 11d) is engaged.

15. Set against the moderate weight I have attached to the benefit in respect of housing supply, and the limited weight I have attached to other benefits, the proposal would cause significant harm to the character and appearance of the area and to neighbouring occupiers' living conditions. Consequently, the adverse impacts of granting planning permission would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the Framework taken as a whole, having particular regard to key policies for securing well-designed places. The scheme does not therefore benefit from the Framework's presumption in favour of sustainable development.

16. The proposal would conflict with the development plan when considered as a whole, and material considerations, including the Framework, do not indicate that the appeal should be decided other than in accordance with it. The appeal is therefore dismissed.

Chris Couper

INSPECTOR