

ASSINGTON - PART SIDE GARDEN L'ECOLE, THE STREET.

Erection of detached two-storey dwelling with attached double garage. Alterations to existing vehicular access.

Applicant: Mr & Mrs J Bradshaw

Case Officer: Richard Collins

BACKGROUND

A panel of Members inspected this site on 30 May 2007 in order to assess the visual impact of the proposed development on the village.

SITE

1. The application site is located on the western side of The Street, and to the north of the main village of Assington, and comprises the part garden of L'Ecole, which was the former village school. The site has a maximum frontage of 24 metres, and a maximum depth of 34 metres, and encompasses an area of approximately 0.07 hectares. The site is enclosed on its northern and eastern boundaries by mature hedging, and the land slopes in a south to north direction. The majority of the site lies within the built-up area boundary for the village, with the first 5 metres of the site from the western boundary located outside of the built-up area boundary. A Special Landscape Area is located to the east of the application site.
2. This part of The Street is characterised by a mixture of dwellings of varying heights, including 2 storey dwellings, 1 and a half storey dwellings and a bungalow, and a mixture of single detached dwellings and a pair of semi-detached properties. The application site was formerly designated as an AVRA (Area of Visual and/or Recreational Amenity) in the 2003 Local Plan. This AVRA has now been deleted from the 2006 Local Plan on the grounds that it is used as a private garden and has a well-developed mature frontage hedge, and the designation as an AVRA could prevent the owner's full enjoyment of their property.

PROPOSAL

3. This planning application seeks permission for the erection of a detached two-storey dwelling with attached double garage, and alterations to existing vehicular access.
4. The two-storey dwelling measures 16.6 metres in width, and 14.5 metres in depth. The maximum ridge height is 7.9 metres, with a height of 4.7 metres to the eaves. The attached double garage is 7.1 metres wide, and 5.5 metres in depth. The ridge height of the garage is 5.4 metres in height, and the garage projects from the front elevation of the dwelling by a maximum of 5.5 metres.

5. The ground floor of the dwelling provides for dining room, sitting room, study, hall, utility room, w/c, kitchen and breakfast area. The first floor provides for 4 bedrooms (2 with en-suite), dressing area, bathroom, and landing. The materials to be used include facing red brickwork, clay plain tiles and slates on the single-storey breakfast room. Vehicular parking is proposed at the front of the site, utilising the existing access at the front of the site.
6. A Design and Access Statement from the applicant has been submitted with the application. The following comprises a summary of the points raised: -
 - The application is to provide a permanent dwelling for occupation by the applicant.
 - ... The site is a remote side garden to the existing dwelling, separated from its principal garden by a driveway.
 - The frontage width is reduced by reason of the existing access serving the dwelling and the existing foul drainage plant.
 - The proposal represents an infill site on a site which can reasonably only accommodate one dwelling.
 - The pattern of development adjoining the site is of individual detached buildings with good separation.
 - The site is defined as brownfield land in PPS3.

RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

7. 1984 – Planning permission granted for conversion of school into 2 dwellings – B/84/00346/FUL refers.
8. 1985 – Planning permission granted for conversion of former school to one dwelling, erection of double garage and construction of vehicular access – B/85/00534/FUL refers.

POLICY

Planning Policy Statement 3: Housing

9. PPS3 states that the density of existing development should not dictate that of new housing by stifling or requiring replication of existing style or form. If done well, imaginative design and layout of a new development can lead to a more efficient use of land without compromising the quality of the local environment.

Please note that details or extracts of policies are no longer included in reports – see page 4 of these papers.

10. The following adopted Development Plan policies are considered relevant to this application: -

Suffolk Structure Plan 2001

- Policy ENV3 (Design Standards)
- Policies CS1 & CS3 (Location of new development)

Babergh Local Plan Alteration No.2 (2006)

- Policy CN01 (General Design)
- Policy HS02 (New housing development in villages)
- Policy HS28 (Infill housing development)
- Policy HS27 (Housing density)
- Policy HS30 (Design of new housing)
- Policy HS32 (Public Open Space contributions)
- Policy LP01 (Planning obligations)
- Policy TP15 (Parking in new developments)

OBSERVATIONS

11. PC – Recommends Approval
12. CHA – No objection subject to standard conditions.
13. SPS – Objects to application on the following grounds:
 - The Society questions whether on policy grounds this proposal should be permitted.
 - The design is totally inappropriate to the character of the area and does not comply with the Council’s guidance note on this issue.

ASSESSMENT

14. The key policy in this case is HS27, which advises residential housing densities should be at least 30 dwellings per hectare otherwise planning permission will not be granted, unless the environmental quality or character dictates otherwise. Also relevant is policy HS02, which advises infill development in villages will be acceptable providing that there is no significant adverse impact on (inter alia) the scale and character of the village; residential amenity; landscape characteristics; the availability of services and facilities; and highway safety.
15. Also relevant to this case are policies ENV3, HS30 and CN01, which seek to ensure a high standard of layout and design in new housing developments.
16. The main issues to be assessed in the determination of this application are as follows:
 - Planning policies;
 - Design and Layout;
 - Public Open Space contributions.

Planning policies

17. The majority of the site lies within the defined built-up area boundary of the village and there can be no objection in settlement planning policy terms to further residential development here. Indeed Government guidance (PPS3) seeks to promote the development of previously developed land (including gardens) and to make efficient use of such land by developing at higher densities, subject to local character and identity being preserved.

18. Policy HS02 provides that in villages housing developments will be granted planning permission (for infilling up to 3 dwellings), provided that there are no significant adverse impact on (inter alia) the scale and character of the village; residential amenity; landscape characteristics; the availability of services and facilities; and highway safety, and policy HS27 states that residential development will not be granted permission where the density is below 30 dwellings per hectare. This is also reiterated in PPS3 – Housing, published in November 2006.
19. This proposal results in a density of 14 dwellings per hectare, which is well below the density figure stipulated in national and local planning policy of 30, and therefore results in an inefficient use of land. As stated in policy HS27, and PPS3, this in itself is not a sole reason for refusing the application, but the local character and identity of the area needs to be assessed against this low-density figure.
20. Due to the mixed character of the locality i.e. the mixture of housing types and styles, it is considered by officers that the application site could accommodate a higher density of dwellings, perhaps akin to the pair of semi-detached dwellings located to the north of the site. As a result, and as the site is located within the built-up area boundary of the village, and Assington has very few developable areas within the built-up area boundary, the provision of smaller dwellings, although perhaps not ‘affordable properties’ as such, would increase the provision of smaller dwelling units in the village, and would benefit those looking to enter the housing market.
21. Therefore it can be concluded that the proposal for residential development on this site represents an inefficient use of land contrary to adopted Local Plan policy.

Design and Layout

22. Policies ENV3 of the Structure Plan and HS30 and CN01 of the Local Plan require high standards of siting, design and landscaping in all new developments, and that design and layouts should respect the characteristics of their sites and surroundings.
23. The character of the immediate locality surrounding the site consists of one and a half storey dwellings to the south and east of the site, constructed in red brick and plain tiles, a pair of two-storey semi-detached dwellings to the north of the site, constructed in red brick and plain tiles, and a further 2-storey red brick dwelling to the north, and a bungalow set back from the highway to the north-east of the site. The ground levels undulate in this location, however in the main the host dwelling to the south of the site is set higher than the application site, and the land and highway to the east of the site is set lower than the application site.
24. As a result, the proposed dwelling is considered out of scale and form with the surrounding development by virtue of being two-storey in construction. It is also considered by officers that the proposed facing materials of red brick results in an over dominant structure, and the materials could be broken up to assist in softening the appearance of the building. Furthermore, the character of the locality is one of detached or attached garages set along side or to the rear of the host dwelling. This proposal provides for a forward projecting attached garage, set approximately 5.5 metres further forward than the main front

elevation of the dwelling, and approximately 1 metre from the front boundary of the application site. This element of the proposal is therefore considered incongruous in its siting, and harmful to visual amenity.

Public Open Space contributions

25. Policy HS32 requires the applicant/developer to either provide 10% of the application site as public open space (where agreed in advance with the Local Planning Authority) or financial contributions towards the upgrade/expansion of existing Local Authority maintained areas of public open space away from the site. In this case, it is considered that the provision of 10% of the application site area is not a suitable option given the small size of the site (which will not provide a usable area of open space). The agent has confirmed that they are willing to provide a financial contribution towards the off-site provision of new, or upgrade of existing public open space, however at the time of writing the section 106 agreement has not been received by the Council, and therefore this is another reason to recommend refusal of the application.

26. In view of the above and having regard to the relevant Development Plan and its policies, the following recommendation is made -

RECOMMENDATION

Refuse planning permission. Reasons –

Inefficient use of land, poor design and layout of dwelling, and lack of public open space contributions – contrary to objectives of PPS3, policies ENV3, CS1 and CS3 of the Suffolk Structure Plan 2001, and policies HS27, HS30, HS28, HS02, HS32 and CN01 of the Babergh Local Plan Alteration No.2 (2006).

DECISION