
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 29 April 2014

by Douglas Machin BSc Dip TP MRTPI

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

Decision date: 1 May 2014

Appeal Ref: APP/R3325/A/13/2210763

12 Gastons Lane, Bower Hinton, Martock, Somerset TA12 6LN

- 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 W Slade and Son Ltd against the decision of the South Somerset District Council.
 - The application Ref: 13/03627/FUL, dated 09/08/2013 was refused by notice dated 04/11/2013
 - The development proposed is the construction of five dwellings together with associated access, car parking and landscaping, and partial demolition and alterations to No 12 Gastons Lane to form a 2 bedroom dwelling.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue in this appeal is whether the current proposal would have a similar adverse impact on the character and appearance of the western edge of Bower Hinton to the previous scheme for 10 dwellings, which was recently dismissed on appeal (Ref: APP/R3325/A/13/2196074).

Reasons

3. As far as is relevant, I have taken the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG), issued 6 March 2014, into account in reaching my decision.
4. The planning policy context, including the housing supply position in the District, remains the same as when my colleague determined the 2013 appeal. Therefore I will not rehearse those matters in this letter. What has changed with the current scheme is the reduction in the number of proposed houses, and the appellant's attempt to overcome the previous objection by a landscape plan aimed at screening the houses. This plan is underpinned by a landscape and visual impact assessment. It aims to demonstrate that after 10 years of growth, the existing and proposed tree and shrub planting would effectively conceal the proposed houses from the countryside to the west and south.
5. However this assessment does not persuade me that the proposal would have any less harmful an impact on Bower Hinton's appearance and character. I note that the appeal site is outside the village's settlement boundary. I saw that it adjoins the substantial rear gardens of the houses in Back Lane. I agree

with the Council that, with those gardens, the appeal site is clearly part of the transition area between the village's historic street pattern and the countryside to the west. By introducing a cul de sac form of housing that would intrude into this transition area, and the reliance on a rather contrived access arrangement, I consider that the proposal would perpetuate the incongruous nature of the existing houses in Gastons Lane. The contrast between the proposed houses and the predominant character of houses and buildings in Back Lane would be too great. The consequence would be that the local distinctiveness of Bower Hinton would not be reinforced but further eroded

6. The appeal site is part of rising land on the edge of the village. It is next to an area of countryside that has been identified ¹ as an Area of High Visual Sensitivity. Even with the proposed landscape buffer, my judgement is that the proposed houses and the domestic activity generated would be visible in the short term. In the longer term dependent upon the seasons, and also any shortfall in maintenance and control of the species planted, the houses would stand out. This obtrusiveness would be seen from the footpath across the open field to the west of the site in particular as causing an undesirable erosion of the current soft edge to the village.
7. In conclusion the form of development proposed, like the previous scheme, would have an unacceptable adverse impact on Bower Hinton's appearance and character. I am not convinced that this proposal would comply with Local Plan Policies ST5 and ST6 or with the relevant part of the National Planning Policy Framework and Planning Practice Guidance, which emphasise the importance of raising the quality of design, and reinforcing local distinctiveness and a sense of place. This failure outweighs the benefit of the scheme in providing additional housing. I have taken into account all the other matters raised but none changes my conclusion that this appeal must be dismissed.

Douglas Machin

Inspector

¹ South Somerset DC Peripheral Landscape Study – Martock – Fig 3