

TRINITY
AXMOUTH

07/0444/FUL

Target Date: 06.04.07

Applicant: Mrs B Harwood
Location: Blue Hayes, Stepps Lane, Axmouth
Proposal: Erection of dwelling including alterations to existing access

CONSULTATIONS

County Highway Authority

I understand the site lies within the development boundary. I note there are no footways leading from the site to the centre of Axmouth.

The proposals seek to alter the existing point of access to create two separate entrances. The existing access is substandard in terms of visibility. For new development I would expect to see visibility splays based on co-ordinates of 2.4 m x 33m (for 20 mph traffic). The plans indicate the provision of splays based on co-ordinates of just 2.4m x 7.2m. They also indicate a 1.1m wide verge which does not appear to exist on the ground. As a consequence the required splays could have a significant impact on the existing hedgerow/bank.

Unless a plan is submitted indicating the provision of appropriate visibility splays in line with the aforementioned requirements, refusal of the application on highway safety grounds would be recommended.

TOWN/PARISH COUNCIL

No objections – we would ask that all hedgerows and significant trees are kept.

WARD MEMBER(S)

The initial comments of the Ward Member are -

“The application is in my ward and I recommend APPROVAL.

This is a sensitively designed project and would fit in with the rural character of the area. I am particularly worried about Highways requiring a large splayed entrance. Stepps Lane is a quiet rural unspecified thoroughfare carrying a 30 mph speed limit. Any large splay would result in the destruction of a large length of ancient Devon bank and hedgerow.

Surely in a 30mph area splays the size Devon highways are suggesting are not required.

If my views differ from the recommendation I request that the application comes before the Planning Committee.”

In the event that this application comes to Committee I would reserve my position until I am in full possession of all the relevant facts and arguments for and against.

REPRESENTATIONS

Objections

3 letters have been received raising the following points:

- Proposal is too big and overbearing for the plot
- Not in sympathy or in keeping with the single storey buildings on the east side of Stepps Lane
- Single storey bungalow would be more in keeping
- Two storey development would create a precedent for future inappropriate development
- Loss of trees within the site
- Level of traffic movement generated from house as opposed to a smaller bungalow.

Support

No letters have been received.

RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

No planning history

PLANNING POLICIES

Government Guidance

PPS 1 – Delivering Sustainable Development
PPS 3 - Housing

Devon County Structure Plan (2001-2016)

Policy CO3 – Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty
Policy CO6 - Quality of New Development

East Devon Local Plan (1995-2011)

Policy S4 – Development within Built-up Area Boundaries
Policy D1 – Design and Local Distinctiveness
Policy EN1 – Development in Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty
Policy TA7 – Adequacy of Road Network and Site Access

SITE LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION

Axmouth is set within a valley and Stepps Lane is located in the south western part of Axmouth and rises above the valley bottom to the south-east. The lane is characterised by a line of ribbon development of predominantly single storey properties in a mix of styles.

The application site is a roughly triangular part of the garden of an existing dwelling Blue Hayes and is located partly within the Built up Area boundary line for the village. The dwelling is set at the rear of the plot and is just outside of the boundary line. The Local Plan map attached shows the built up area boundary. The bulk of the new dwelling lies within the boundary but the garage, access and part of the rear garden lies outside the boundary.

The site is within the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

The erection of a detached two storey dwelling with an adjoining car port in a mix of thatch, tile, render and stone and the creation of an additional access onto Stepps Lane.

CONSIDERATIONS AND ASSESSMENT

The key issues in the determination of this application are the principle, scale and design of the proposed development, the impact on the AONB, the impact on residential amenity and highway issues.

Principle, Design and Scale of the Proposed Development

As part of the site lies outside the Built up Area Boundary the principle of residential development is not established. In addition, consideration needs to be given to whether or not the plot is an appropriate site for development. Notwithstanding the emphasis on the efficient use of land for housing it is recognised that not every piece of land within a development boundary should be built out as consideration must also be given to issues of layout, design and sustainability. In this case it is clear that land outside the development boundary is needed to create a much larger access, together with parking and garaging.

The plot cannot be considered a true infill plot as it clearly reads as the front part of the larger curtilage of Blue Hayes and any dwelling on this plot would be highly visible and prominent. As Blue Hayes is set to the rear of the plot and the property is well screened to the front boundary, it is not publicly visible from the highway and therefore visually the pattern of development begins with the adjacent property Frogmore. The erection of this new dwelling would therefore extend the visible pattern of development and would result in the visible extension of ribbon development along Stepps Lane. This is not a development pattern that is normally supported as the spread of ribbon development can significantly alter the rural or semi rural character of an area through the outward spread of built form.

Stepps Lane is characterised by predominantly single storey bungalows which, while not being of great architectural merit, are nevertheless fairly low key in their visual impact and this lane has a predominantly rural character. The new building being two storey would be highly visible and prominent and given the contrived nature of the site it is considered that this dwelling would appear overdeveloped and would be significantly more prominent than the adjacent dwellings on this side of Stepps Lane. Although there is a large two storey property opposite the application site the eastern side of Stepps Lane is characterised by small single storey properties in even plots and the development of this property would be out of character not only in terms of the form and massing of the building but also in terms of the relationship of the building to the plot. The development therefore fails to reinforce the key characteristics of the area.

Impact on the AONB

As the site is located towards the bottom of the valley in which Axmouth sits it is not considered that development itself will have a significant impact on the visual quality or character of the AONB. The site does have views out across the valley into the wider countryside but any views back will see the proposed development in the context of the existing settlement pattern and while for the reasons given above it is considered that this will have an adverse impact on the immediate character of the lane it is not considered that this will have a wider adverse impact on the natural beauty of the AONB.

Impact on Residential Amenity

Due to the orientation of the existing and proposed properties, the positioning of proposed first floor windows and the scope for additional boundary screening it is not considered that the proposed dwelling would have a detrimental impact on the residential amenity of either Frogmore to the south or Blue Hayes to the north east.

Highway Issues

There is a significant mature hedgerow to the front of the property and the development would result in the realignment and widening of the existing access into the application site through the hedge. This would have some impact on the hedge but would allow most of it to be retained but the Highways Officer has requested a substantial visibility splay of 2.4 m x 33m to serve the new and existing access which if achievable would result in the loss of the majority of the hedgerow from the frontage of the site. The agent was invited to put in amended plans to demonstrate whether or not this level of visibility could be achieved but the agent considers that this of visibility is not appropriate for this village location and they wish to retain the hedgerow as much as possible. They have therefore only provided a visibility splay of 2.4m x 6 m.

While the retention of the hedgerow is supported in principle the professional assessment of the Highway Officer is clear and therefore the application has failed to demonstrate that adequate visibility can be achieved to address the highway safety implications of the development. If a development requires visibility measures that would in turn have an adverse visual impact due to loss of important natural features then development should be refused as being inappropriate rather than accepting an inadequate and unsafe access arrangement.

Impact on Trees

The development would result in the loss of the majority of the trees within the site but the Councils Arboricultural Officer has identified that other than collectively providing a good level of visual amenity the trees are of low quality and should not pose a constraint to the development of the site and in most cases would not be suitable for retention. Therefore the loss of these trees is not a sufficient reason to refuse planning permission although it would be appropriate to seek some additional replacement planting as part of a landscaping condition if the application were to be permitted. The Arboricultural Officer has also identified that the existing boundary hedge offers a good level of amenity and will help soften the edges of the development and should be retained. Again this would be supported but would conflict with the visibility requirements of the Highway Authority.

CONCLUSIONS

The principle of the development of this site and the proposed dwelling is not considered to be acceptable as it would harmfully extend ribbon development along Stepps Lane and would be out of character with the pattern and form of development in the area. Inadequate information has also been provided to demonstrate that a safe and satisfactory access can be achieved to serve the new and existing development.

RECOMMENDATION

REFUSE for the following reason(s)

1. The site lies partly outside the Built-up Area Boundary as set out in the adopted East Devon Local Plan contrary to Policy S5 which seeks to protect areas outside development limits from development.
2. The proposal, by virtue of the positioning and size of the plot and the prominence and form of the dwelling, would result in an increase of ribbon development along Stepps Lane which would undermine the semi rural character of the lane and would fail to reflect or reinforce the key characteristics of the development on this side of Stepps Lane. The proposal is therefore contrary to Policy CO6 (Quality of New Development) of the Devon County Structure Plan (2001-2016) and Policies S4 (Development within Built-up Area Boundaries) and D1 (Design and Local Distinctiveness) of the East Devon Local Plan 1995 – 2011.

3. Inadequate information has been provided to demonstrate that a safe access to serve both the existing and proposed dwellings can be achieved with sufficient visibility so as not to create a danger between vehicles using the accesses and travelling on the adjacent highway. The proposal is therefore contrary to Policy TA7 (Adequacy of Road Network and Site Access) of the East Devon Local Plan 1995 – 2011.

Refused plans

- Drawing Number 1.A Site Location and Site Layout Plan received 22 March 2007
- Drawing Number 2 Ground and First Floor Plans received 9 February 2007
- Drawing Number 3 Elevation Plans received 9 February 2007

List of Background Papers

Application file, consultations and policy documents referred to in the report.