

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 23 January 2017

by Zoe Raygen Dip URP MRTPI

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

Decision date: 6 February 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/R3515/W/16/3159144
116 Renfrew Road, Ipswich IP4 3HP

- 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 Meekings against the decision of Ipswich Borough Council.
 - The application Ref IP/16/00679/FUL, dated 16 July 2016, was refused by notice dated 14 September 2016.
 - The development proposed is erection of two-storey dwelling.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are firstly, the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area and secondly, the effect of the proposal on highway safety.

Reasons

Character and appearance

3. The appeal site forms the side garden to 116 Renfrew Road which is a two storey semi-detached house. No 116 sits at the end of a row of similarly designed semi-detached houses set back from and following a bend in the road creating a uniform character to the design and layout of the housing. The surrounding area is formed mainly from similar semi-detached houses, with gaps in between them and generous grass verges creating an open spacious feel to the housing. Corner plots generally have a large side garden, contributing to the open character of the area.
 4. No 116 sits on the corner of Renfrew Road and Moffat Avenue. It has a large side garden, containing a number of outbuildings which is enclosed by a high close boarded fence. Nevertheless the lack of two storey development on the garden means that it contributes positively to the open character and appearance of the corner plots and the estate as a whole.
 5. The proposal to erect a dwelling in the side garden of No 116 would mean that the existing generous spacing between No 116 and the road would, according to the appellant be reduced to about 3.1metres. This has not been disputed by the Council.
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6. The proposed house would be two storey with a pitched roof and therefore would be a large bulky development that would be clearly visible above the boundary fence. It would fill the planned gap at this corner location, created by the side garden of the appeal property, and due to its form and proximity to the highway, it would reduce the feeling of space and openness, which is a characteristic of this junction and the wider estate.
7. The proposal would be viewed as part of the street scene of both Moffat Avenue and Renfrew Road. It would project beyond the fairly uniform front building line of both streets which would be contrary to guidance within the Council's Space and Design Guidelines Supplementary Planning Document 2015 (the SPD). The amount of projection towards Renfrew Road would be restricted to a single storey porch. Nevertheless the houses are set back to accommodate the bend in the road. The proposed house would not follow that bend and as a result would be significantly closer to the road than others within the row.
8. Irrespective of the exact distance of projection in front of properties on Moffat Avenue the proposal would present a large gable elevation close to the road which would be particularly obtrusive. As it would be sited on a prominent corner location, it would appear dominant in the street. This together with the projection towards Renfrew Road would amount to a significantly harmful change that would not be in keeping with the existing strong building lines on both streets.
9. I acknowledge that there would still be a gap of about 3 metres between the house and the road. Furthermore the size of the corner plots and hence the side gardens vary across the estate with No 116 being one of the larger ones. Nevertheless, the majority of corner plots that I saw maintained established building lines and a generous gap between the house and the highway that would not be the case here.
10. The proposal would be seen within the context of a large space between 114 Renfrew Road and the highway, together with the wide grass verges at the sides of Moffat Avenue and the central grass and tree lined island. Nonetheless, this would not be sufficient to overcome the unacceptable adverse impact on openness caused at the junction by the proposal.
11. The Council suggest that the lack of off street parking would lead to additional cars parking on the grass verges which would be to the detriment of the character and appearance of the area. At the time of my site visit I did see some cars parked on the grass verges. While the proposed house would have no off street parking I have seen nothing to suggest that the cars would have to park on the grass verges. Moreover, there is nothing before me to suggest that unauthorised overspill parking could not be effectively controlled through other mechanisms. In this respect therefore I am not convinced that additional parking in respect of one house would be significantly harmful to the character and appearance of the area.
12. Whilst therefore I have found the proposal to be acceptable in some respects, for the reasons above I conclude that the proposal would be harmful to the character and appearance of the area. It would therefore be contrary to Policies DM5 and DM13 of the Ipswich Core Strategy and Policies Development Plan Document 2011 (the DPD), Policies DM5 and DM13 of the Proposed Submission Core Strategy and Policies Development Plan Document Review 2014 (the emerging DPD), the SPD and the National Planning Policy Framework (the

Framework). These require that development is well designed and sustainable and that severance plots protect the character and appearance of the area.

Highway safety

13. Generally dwellings in the area have limited access to off street parking. Some have a small area of hardstanding within the front garden, but I also saw a lot of off street parking in the area. Furthermore there are small areas for communal parking. The appeal proposal would continue this theme through the siting of a two bedroom property with no off street parking contrary to The Suffolk Guidance for Parking 2015 (the SGP) which requires that two off-street parking spaces are provided.
14. The SGP allows for a reduction in standards within main urban areas where a proposal has been designed to be exceptionally sustainable. Main urban areas are defined as those having frequent and extensive opportunities for public transport, cycling and walking with close proximity to a wide range of local services and on street parking controls at all times.
15. There is a bus stop adjacent to the appeal site and it is within walking distance of a Local Centre on Selkirk Road which provides a limited range of services. While therefore the appeal site is within a relatively accessible location it would not meet the definition of main urban area contained within the SGP. Nor would it be located within the IP-one area referred to in Policy DM18 of both the DPD and the emerging DPD where parking standards would also be relaxed.
16. At the time of my site visit, which was on a weekday afternoon, despite there being a parking restriction to the east of the appeal site, the occupancy of the street parking was low and I had no problem parking safely within sight of the location of the proposed dwelling. I appreciate that demand is likely to be higher at the end of the working day and at weekends. However, the amount of space available and limited evidence of damage to grass verges does not indicate a high degree of parking stress or overload in the locality.
17. The proposal is for a small two bedroom house. As a result it would be unlikely to generate significant levels of traffic requiring on street parking over and above that already occurring. While I note the comments of the Highway Authority and one neighbouring resident, from my visit to the site and the surrounding streets, I do not consider that the lack of off street parking spaces for the new dwelling in the proposal would result in unsustainable pressure on the existing on-street parking in the area. Nor has it been demonstrated that there would be a harmful effect on highway safety as a result of the additional, on-street parking.
18. Therefore as the proposal does not provide any on-site parking it would be contrary to guidance contained in the SGP, Policies DM5, DM13 and DM18 of the DPD and Policies DM5, DM13 and DM18 of the emerging DPD which require that car parking is provided on site in accordance with the SGP. However, for the reasons above I conclude that the proposal would not be harmful to highway safety. It would therefore be in accordance with Policy DM17 of the DPD and Policy DM17 of the emerging DPD and the Framework which require that development is assessed in terms of highway safety and should only be prevented on transport grounds where the residual cumulative impacts are severe.

Conclusion

19. Although I have concluded that the proposal would not be harmful to highway safety, this does not outweigh my main finding that the proposal would cause significant harm to the character and appearance of the area. Accordingly, I conclude that the proposal would not be in accordance with the policies of the development plan taken as a whole. For this reason, having regard to all other matters raised I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Zoe Raygen

INSPECTOR