

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 24 January 2017

by Paul Singleton BSc (Hons) MA MRTPI

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

Decision date: 16th February 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/A0665/W/3163109

42 Parkfield Drive, Helsby, Cheshire WA6 0BL

- 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 Liam Simkiss against the decision of Cheshire West & Chester Council.
 - The application Ref 15/02145/FUL, dated 28 April 2015, was refused by notice dated 11 August 2016.
 - The development proposed is a new dwelling with detached garage and new drive.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matter

2. The description of development set out in the appeal form and decision notice are slightly different from that given in the original planning application. I have adopted the revised wording used in the decision notice as providing the most accurate description of the appeal proposal.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the street and surrounding area.

Reasons

4. The predominant form of development in Parkfield Drive and other nearby streets is that of pairs of semi-detached properties separated by two driveway widths and following a generally uniform building line to the street frontage. This pattern, together with other standard features of the properties, such as a 2-storey form, pitched roofs, the use of red brick and tile as the main external finishes, and the presence of a low brick wall to the roadside boundary creates a uniform character and appearance and introduces a strong sense of rhythm into the street scene.
 5. On the external corners of the road junctions a splayed arrangement has been adopted, with the angled alignment of a semi-detached pairing helping to turn the building line around the corner as can be seen at numbers 37-39 and numbers 34-36. However, my observations on my site visit are that, on the internal corners of a junction or bend in the road, the standard pattern is that the building lines meet at right angles with resultant over-sized gardens to the end properties and a significantly larger gap between them. This is the
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arrangement that exists in relation to numbers 42 (the appeal property) and number 44. The appellant suggests this arrangement is unique in the local area but my observations do not support that contention. I have no doubt that this increased spacing was intentional on the part of those who designed the estate.

6. I accept that the appeal proposal would not comprise 'back land' development in the normal understanding of that term. However, the proposal would be incongruous within the established pattern of development in the street by virtue both of its being a single detached house rather than a semi-detached pairing and of the proposed building line which would be set some distance behind that of the properties on either side.
7. The gap between numbers 42 and 44 may provide for views through to the gable elevations of properties in Sherwood Grove but that is not a reason for seeking to fill that gap with further development. The proposal would result in the proposed development having a cramped appearance and being a discordant element that would interrupt the existing appearance and rhythm of the street scene. The loss of the existing vegetation on the boundary between numbers 42 and 44 would also cause some, albeit limited, detriment to the appearance of the area.
8. For these reasons I find that the proposal would have a significant adverse effect on the character and appearance of the street scene in Parkfield Drive and the surrounding residential area. The proposal would, therefore, conflict with saved Policy BE1 of the Vale Royal Borough Local Plan which states that proposals for new development will be expected to achieve a high standard of design and should take full account of the characteristics of the development site and its relationship with its surroundings. It would also conflict with Helsby Neighbourhood Plan (HNP) Policy H5, which requires that the scale and form of new housing development should fit unobtrusively with the character of the street scene and that spacing between buildings should respect the character of the street. The Council also allege conflict with HNP Policy H6 but, as I do not consider the proposal to comprise back land housing as envisaged in that policy, I do not find any conflict with Policy H6.

Other Matters

9. The appellant points to a development that has been permitted on a site which previously formed a gap between properties on Sherwood Grove as providing a precedent for the appeal proposal. However, my observations on my site visit were that the context of that development and its relationship to the building lines of neighbouring houses in the street are not directly comparable to those of the appeal proposal.
10. Some nearby residents have raised concerns regarding a loss of privacy but, based on the observations I made on my site visit, I consider that no significant effects would arise in this respect. The submitted plans do not demonstrate how the subdivision of the existing driveway might work in practice such that vehicles would safely be able to manoeuvre into and out of the proposed drives. However, I consider that this matter could be dealt with by means of a planning condition if planning permission was to be granted.

Conclusion

11. For the reasons set out above I conclude that the appeal should fail.

Paul Singleton

INSPECTOR