
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 20 June 2017

by Amanda Blicq BSc (Hons) MA CMLI

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

Decision date: 30 June 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/W0340/W/17/3171991

27 Dell Road, Tilehurst, Reading, Berkshire RG13 6PA

- 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 Charles Mabbett against the decision of West Berkshire Council.
 - The application Ref 16/03454/FUL, dated 12 December 2016, was refused by notice dated 10 February 2017.
 - The development proposed is demolition of the existing bungalow and erection of a self-build replacement chalet bungalow.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matter

2. For brevity I have used the description of development given on the decision notice in the heading above.

Main Issues

3. The main issues are the effect of the development on:
 - the character and appearance of the area; and,
 - whether the proposals would represent sustainable development in the context of relevant local and national policies.

Reasons

Character and appearance

4. The appeal site is a broadly triangular plot located at the end of a cul de sac. The existing dwelling, No 27, is a modest bungalow with hipped roof, situated on a slight gradient within a series of similar dwellings. Although some dwellings have extensions these are single storey and in keeping with the scale of the host dwelling. The combination of hipped roofs and relatively low ridgelines on these bungalows contributes to the street scene's open character.
5. There is a series of two storey dwellings to the west of the appeal site but these dwellings are set at a level lower than the road and consequently the impact of their bulk and massing is reduced when viewed from the street scene.

6. The proposals would comprise the demolition of No 27 and its replacement with a two storey dwelling, with a mono-pitch roof parallel to the road and central gable. The ridgeline would be 2.25 metres higher than the ridgeline of 28 Dell Road¹ (No 28). This would be a disproportionate increase in height and No 28, which has a ground to ridge height of around 4.5 metres, would appear dwarfed in comparison². The roof's height and form would also be considerably bulkier than the shallow hipped roofs of its neighbours. This would result in the development dominating the cul de sac.
7. Furthermore, behind the ridgeline there would be a flat roof, and two storey flank walls extending some 9 metres to the rear³. These walls would be some 5.5 metres high and would tower over the adjacent dwellings as well as appearing poorly proportioned in the context of the dwelling's more traditional front elevation. Moreover, the proposed detailing of small, multi-paned windows, brick quoins and string courses continued from the front elevation, would appear out of place and under-scaled on the development's sides and rear, whose form would be more reflective of modernist architecture.
8. I appreciate that No 27 is a sizeable plot and could, in principle, accommodate a larger dwelling. However, in this instance the development's footprint would be near double that of the current dwelling and plot size does not justify a design of such disproportionate scale. Furthermore, the site tapers towards the road and the development's two-storey flank walls would be within 1 metre of the plot boundaries at its front, and part of the front elevation would project beyond the existing building line. Given the context, this is indicative of development that fails to respect the underlying building pattern and which is overly large for the plot.
9. Consequently, I consider the development's poor design and proportions, as well as inappropriate detailing and lack of articulation, would be entirely incongruous with the scale, form and composition of other dwellings around the cul de sac. It would have a height, mass and bulk substantially in excess of nearby dwellings. As such it would appear dominant and bulky, and disproportionately large compared to the established building pattern.
10. The appellant has submitted a character assessment which comprises photographs of dwellings in the area, selected in an apparently random manner. Although I appreciate that there is a range of building form and style in the wider area, the assessment does not analyse the scale, articulation, form or layout of the established building pattern in the immediate vicinity of the site. Consequently, this is not of particular relevance to the appeal and I give it little weight.
11. The appellant argues that other dwellings around the cul de sac have increased their footprint through extensions. However, the extensions I noted on my visit were subservient to their host dwellings. In any case, this development is not an extension to an existing dwelling.
12. The appellant also argues that the development's flat roof and flank walls would not affect the street scene. However, the front elevation would not be seen in isolation as from all views other than directly facing, the flank walls

¹ Dwg. Proposed Street Scene

² Dwg. Proposed Street Scene

³ Measured from Dwg. Proposed Elevations

would be visible above the roofs of the adjacent dwellings. Consequently, the development would not retain the appearance of a bungalow when viewed from the road.

13. I disagree with the appellant that the existing raised rear amenity space is visible from the public domain. I noted at my visit that it was only possible to see the sides of the rear garden from the road and as such I give the argument that the existing dwelling provides insufficient screening, little weight. In any case, the evidence before me indicates that there was mature vegetation in the rear garden when No 27 was purchased, and boundary treatments and further planting could be used to provide additional screening if required.
14. I appreciate that there have been no objections from neighbours. However, there has been a representation from the parish council in respect of the height of the flank walls. In any case, lack of objection does not necessarily indicate an absence of harm as there may be many reasons why neighbours do not object to a development. Furthermore, my reasoning has to consider future as well as existing residents.
15. I appreciate that the current dwelling appears to need refurbishment and maintenance work, but this does not justify its demolition and replacement with a significantly larger dwelling. I also appreciate that the raised garden would allow the creation of an upper living area to provide a direct link to the garden, but this does not alter my reasoning in respect of the development's overall form and size.
16. Policy CS14 of the Local Plan⁴ (LP) states that new development must demonstrate high quality and sustainable design that respects and enhances the character and appearance of the area. It also states, amongst other parameters, that development shall make a positive contribution to local distinctiveness and sense of place, and make efficient use of land whilst respecting the density and character of the surrounding area⁵. Furthermore, one of the core planning principles cited in Paragraph 17 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) is that planning should seek to secure high quality design.
17. With respect to this appeal I conclude that the development, by virtue of its scale and form, would appear incongruous and dominant. It would not represent high quality design and would have a significant adverse effect on the character and appearance of the area. It would therefore fail to comply with the provisions of LP Policy CS14, or the core planning principles of the Framework.
18. LP Policy CS19 appears to be concerned primarily with the historic environment and landscape character. I am not satisfied that it is of relevance here as this is an urban setting.

Sustainable development

19. Paragraph 7 of the Framework sets out the three strands of sustainable development. I acknowledge that there would be a limited and short-term economic benefit from the development. However, there would be no net increase in local housing stock and the development would neither protect nor

⁴ West Berkshire Council, Core Strategy (2006-2026), July 2012

⁵ The considerations of landscape and biodiversity are not of relevance in this instance

enhance the built environment as required by the Framework. There is nothing in the evidence before me to indicate that I should not give the LP policies full weight, and as I have found the development contrary to the cited LP policies as well as the Framework, I conclude that it would not represent sustainable development.

Other matters

20. Interested parties have raised additional concerns in relation to parking provision. However, there is nothing before me to indicate that three spaces for a four-bedroomed dwelling would be insufficient and furthermore, this provision was not raised as a concern by the Council's highways consultee. As such, I am not satisfied the parking provision would be inadequate if the appeal was allowed.
21. The appellant has drawn attention to procedural issues encountered during the application process. However, such matters are outside the scope of this appeal, and although I appreciate the appellant's argument that there was no opportunity to submit amended plans before determination, I have to determine the appeal before me.
22. I acknowledge that the Council has not quoted Paragraph 17 of the Framework in its entirety in relation to the roles and character of different areas. However, this does not alter my reasoning or my conclusions in respect of policy, outlined above.

Conclusion

23. I appreciate that the development would provide family accommodation, have greater thermal efficiency and increased floor space compared to the existing dwelling. Nonetheless, these limited benefits do not outweigh the harm I have identified above.
24. For the reasons given above and taking all matters into account, I conclude that the development would be contrary to the relevant policies of the Council's Local Plan and that therefore the appeal should be dismissed.

Amanda Blicq

INSPECTOR