
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 12 June 2017

by Alexander Walker MPlan MRTPI

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

Decision date: 4th July 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/D4635/W/17/3170130

Land North East of 32 Laburnum Road, Stowlawn, Wolverhampton WV1 2TH

- 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 Wojcik of Mario Insulation Ltd. against the decision of Wolverhampton City Council.
 - The application Ref 16/00722/FUL, dated 1 July 2016, was refused by notice dated 22 August 2016.
 - The development proposed is two bed semi-detached dwellings.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the development on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

3. Laburnum Road is a residential cul-de-sac comprising semi-detached and detached, two-storey dwellings. The appeal site is at the end of an enclave of dwellings accessed only by a pedestrian footpath. Properties within the enclave line either side of the footpath. These properties are similar in terms of their design, size and plot widths although the end plots on either side, including the appeal site, are slightly larger. The generally uniform design of the dwellings, the regularity of the gaps between them, and their set back position with open front gardens creates a pleasant, spacious character to the area.
4. The appeal site is currently overgrown. The site is similar in depth to the neighbouring properties on this side of the enclave and is slightly wider. The property opposite the site, No 30a Laburnum Road, is on a plot with a similar width and does not appear to have been part of the original enclave development. Whilst the dwelling is slightly wider than the other properties on the street, the plot to building ratio is in keeping and there is adequate spacing either side that retains the spaciousness of the area.
5. The proposed dwellings would occupy almost the full width of the site, with only a narrow entrance adjacent to No 32 Laburnum Road retained to provide access to the rear of the properties. Whilst the overall site is wider than neighbouring plots, the proposed two plots would be significantly narrower. As a consequence the dwellings themselves would also be significantly narrower.

I note that the dwellings would be constructed of similar materials to those found in the locality and the fenestration layout would also be similar. However, the dwellings would be narrower than the neighbouring properties and would have a greater vertical emphasis that would detract from the prevailing design theme throughout the enclave. Furthermore, the lack of spacing either side of the pair of properties would fail to reflect the spaciousness of the area.

6. Overall, the proposal would represent a cramped form of development that would appear overdeveloped and inconsistent with the regularity of the design of the other properties within the enclave, the prevailing pattern of development and would significantly diminish the spaciousness of the area.
7. I acknowledge that the dwellings would not be readily visible off Laburnum Road itself and whilst visible from Warsash Street they would be read against the backdrop of the existing dwellings. Nevertheless, the dwellings would be clearly evident in views from within the enclave.
8. I have regard to the front gardens of the adjacent properties to the east of the site, Nos 38-41 Warsash Close. These gardens make a significant contribution to the spaciousness of the overall area. However, there is limited intervisibility between the enclave on Laburnum Road and the neighbouring Warsash Close and there is no direct access between them. They are read as two distinguishable developments, which the proposal would be firmly read in the context of the enclave. I do not agree that the spaciousness of these gardens can be used to offset significant harm the proposal would have to the spaciousness of the enclave.
9. I find therefore that the proposal would significantly harm the character and appearance of the area. As such, it would be contrary to Saved Policies D4, D6, D9 and H6 of the Wolverhampton Unitary Development Plan which, amongst other matters, seek to ensure that development responds positively to the established pattern of streets and buildings, including plot sizes and spatial character; create and reinforce local distinctiveness; are of an appropriate form; and are of a high standard of design. Furthermore, it would fail to accord with Policies CSP4 and ENV3 of the Black Country Core Strategy 2011, which, amongst other matters, seek to ensure that development makes a clear understanding of the local distinctiveness of the area and provides high quality design.

Other Matters

10. I have had regard to the concerns raised regarding access to drainage. However, as this is a land ownership matter, it has had no bearing on my consideration of the planning merits of the proposal.
11. I have also had regard to the effect of the development on parking provision on Laburnum Road. The proposal offers no on-site parking, as with many of the neighbouring properties. As the proposal would be for two bedroomed properties, it is likely that the parking requirements would be limited. From the observations I made during my site visit, there appeared to be sufficient on street parking nearby to accommodate the limited increase in traffic. Whilst I accept that this was only a snap shot in time, there is no substantive evidence to the contrary. I also note that the local highway authority raise no objection.

12. I acknowledge that the proposal would provide two small dwellings and the appellant's argument that it is in response to the needs of the community. However, there is no evidence before me that there is an identifiable need for two bedroom houses within the locality. Therefore, I can only attribute limited weight to this benefit, which does not outweigh the significant harm I have identified above.

Conclusion

13. For the reasons given above, having regard to all matters raised, the appeal is dismissed.

Alexander Walker

INSPECTOR