
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 30 July 2019

by J Bowyer BSc(Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 13th August 2019

Appeal Ref: APP/V2825/D/19/3229547

48 Abington Park Crescent, Northampton, NN3 3AD

- 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 Ali against the decision of Northampton Borough Council.
 - The application Ref N/2019/0017, dated 31 December 2018, was refused by notice dated 28 February 2019.
 - The development proposed is first floor extension to side over garage and kitchen together with new boundary treatment to frontage, new obscure glazed window to side elevation and modified opening at first floor level to front elevation to access new balcony.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

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

Reasons

3. The appeal site is a corner plot fronting Abington Park Crescent accommodating a detached two storey dwelling with attached single storey garage closest to the boundary with the neighbour at 47 Abington Park Crescent. To the side of the dwelling, there is a wide grass verge which extends a significant distance along Bridgewater Drive.
4. The dwelling on the appeal site similar in style and materials to neighbours at 46 and 47 Abington Park Crescent, although No 47 has implemented extensions including the creation of a first floor over the garage adjacent to the boundary with the appeal site.
5. Nos 44 to 48 Abington Park Crescent and Nos 2, 4 and 6 Bridgewater Drive are characterised by staggered building lines set back from the highway. The separation between these dwellings varies, and as a consequence of the staggered building lines and the depth of dwellings, opportunities for views towards rear gardens are largely limited to vantage points aligned with the gaps.
6. However, the boundaries to the frontages of these sites forward of the dwellings are open or marked only by low hedges or planting. The lack of

- enclosure to the front of these dwellings provides a sense of openness as well as a visual connection to the wide grass verge along Bridgewater Drive.
7. This setting around the dwellings contributes a green and spacious character to the area which is heightened by Abington Park to the west of the site. This large park with many mature trees is part of the Abington Park Conservation Area, although the appeal site itself lies outside of the conservation area. Land levels generally increase towards the north west, and there are long range views available across the frontage of the appeal site and into Abington Park as Bridgewater Drive approaches Abington Park Crescent.
 8. The proposed development would introduce a brick wall at around 0.9m high with railings above and brick piers roughly 1.5m high to most of the site frontage and flank boundary with the Bridgewater Drive verge. Metal railings approximately 1.5m high would mark the boundary with No 47.
 9. The sections of railings would retain a degree of visual permeability. However, the height, length and materials of the proposed boundary projecting forward of the dwelling would nevertheless introduce an uncharacteristic and incongruous degree of enclosure to this part of the street scenes of Abington Park Crescent and Bridgewater Drive. It would also form a visual barrier severing the connection with the adjacent verge. As a result, the development would reduce the openness of the area and obstruct views, including those into and across Abington Park and the conservation area from Bridgewater Drive, and those along Abington Park Crescent.
 10. I observed examples of low walls, hedges and close boarded fencing boundary treatments to the front of some dwellings in the wider context. In particular, I note that there is close boarded fencing with hedge above to the boundaries of 1 Bridgewater Drive which faces the appeal site with Bridgewater Drive and Abington Park Crescent.
 11. However, the site specific circumstances of the appeal site including the relationship with the adjacent verge and the open frontages of the neighbouring properties at Nos 44 to 47 Abington Park Crescent and Nos 2 to 6 Bridgewater Drive mean that the proposed boundary forward of the dwelling would appear unexpectedly harsh, incongruous and visually obstructive in this prominent and otherwise open location. The development would therefore be detrimental to the green and spacious character and appearance of the area.
 12. The proposal also includes extensions and alterations to the appeal dwelling. The Council have raised no concerns over the proposed alterations to the front elevation to provide access to a new balcony or to provision of an obscure glazed window to the side elevation. I see no reason to disagree with this position. However, the Council's first reason for refusal relates to the proposed side extension.
 13. Saved Policy H18 of the Northampton Local Plan (1997) advises that extensions will be granted where the design and appearance of an extension is acceptable and in keeping with the character of the original dwelling. Further guidance is provided within the Residential Extensions and Alterations Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (2011). This includes a general design principle that development should not disrupt the established street pattern, for example where open space and gaps between properties help to define the character and setting of a street. It further advises in relation to side

extensions that a linked or infill effect between neighbouring dwellings should be avoided by leaving a visibly adequate gap between the boundary and the side of the extension.

14. In this case, the neighbour at No 47 is built up to the boundary of the appeal site adjacent to the proposed side extension. The development would reduce spacing between these properties at first floor and roof level and I note that the appeal dwelling is set forward of this neighbour. However, there would remain a discernible gap between the dwellings when viewed from Abington Park Crescent. This would ensure visual separation and would be similar to the spacing apparent between other dwellings close to the appeal site, including that between Nos 46 and 47 Abington Park Crescent, and between Nos 2, 4 and 6 Bridgewater Drive.
15. The development would not therefore result in loss of open space or a gap which is a defining feature of the character or setting of the street, and would resemble the tighter arrangement of other dwellings in close proximity. As a consequence, the side extension would not appear incongruous or result in harm to the street scene or detract from the qualities of the locality.
16. Nonetheless, the proposed boundary treatment would materially harm the character and appearance of the surrounding area. As such, the development would be contrary to saved Policy E20 of the Northampton Local Plan and Policy S10 of the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy (2014). Amongst other aims, these include a requirement for development to reflect the character of its surroundings and to protect, conserve and enhance the natural and built environment and heritage assets and their settings.

Other Matters

17. The appellant indicates that the development is intended to provide additional accommodation and to improve the safety and security of the site. However, I have not been provided with any detailed evidence of any specific safety or security concern. Moreover each proposal is considered on its own merits, as I have done here, this factor does not outweigh the harm that I have identified to the character and appearance of the area.

Conclusion

18. For the reasons given above, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

J Bowyer

INSPECTOR