The Planning Inspectorate

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 20 August 2019

by D Hilton-Brown BSc (Hons) CIEEM

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 23rd September 2019

Appeal Ref: APP/J4525/W/19/3230620
8 Whitburn Bents Road, Sunderland SR6 8AD

- 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 Colinas Estates against the decision of Sunderland City Council.
- The application Ref 18/01746/FUL, dated 1 Oct 2018, was refused by notice dated 8 April 2019.
- The development proposed is the demolition of two existing dwellings and proposed erection of four new detached dwellings.

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matters

2. The address given on the application form only referenced No 8 Whitburn Bents Road. However, the development encompasses both Nos 8 and 9 Whitburn Bent Road, and this is clearly reflected in the appellant's submission and the Council's reports.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the local streetscene, due to the density, scale, massing and layout of the development.

Reasons

4. The site is located on Whitburn Bents Road, which follows the coastline from Seaburn towards Whitburn. The existing housing forms a strong building frontage providing sea views from the properties along this street. The properties are of varied design, but are generally within spacious plots, and consist of mainly detached properties interspersed with semi-detached dwellings and the occasional recently constructed apartments and town houses.

5. The proposed development site is currently occupied by two large 1930's semi-detached, two-storey residential dwellings. Both properties have undergone alterations and extensions since their original construction, but still retain the characteristics of the original 1930's design.

6. The proposal is to demolish the two existing buildings and construct four detached residential dwellings. The new properties would be three-storeys in height and consist of two 4-bedroom and two 5-bedroom houses each with

driveways for off-road parking. They would be constructed of a mixture of red facing brickwork, coloured cladding, glass balconies, grey roof slates and grey facias.

7. The layout, scaling and massing of these four new dwellings would result in the appearance of a line of long narrow terraced houses, within an area that is generally characterised by large detached or semi-detached properties. This would be particularly noticeable when these properties were viewed from up and down the street, from where it would be difficult to differentiate the individual buildings.

8. Furthermore, the density on the appeal site would almost double as a result of the proposed development and would be out of keeping with the surrounding character of the immediate area. The proposed materials, whilst having a contemporary appearance, would not reflect or complement the local character or architectural style of the area and would only exacerbate the issues I have referred to above.

9. I also consider that the proposed roofscape and in particular the gable frontage, would be totally out of character with the local streetscene. I acknowledge the argument that these might mirror the projecting gables of some of the neighbouring properties, but I nonetheless consider they would be incongruous in this sea frontage. I also acknowledge that the proposed dwellings would approximately follow the existing building line, while the ridgelines would be of a similar height to the neighbouring properties. These factors do not however outweigh the harm that I have identified above.

10. I note the existence of similar designs in the wider area. However, these tend to be stand-alone properties and are not located within the middle of the existing streetscene as in this appeal. Therefore, I do not consider them to represent compelling precedents.

11. The appellant has suggested that the City of Sunderland (CoS) Unitary Development Plan (UDP), adopted 1998 and policies saved 2007, is out of date, and should only be afforded weight according to consistency with the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework). However, I consider that the Council's UDP and the Framework are consistent, and both highlight the importance of development which is sympathetic to the local character of the built environment. Consequently, I have given full consideration to the CoS UDP policies and the Framework in this case.

12. I therefore conclude that this development would conflict with the objectives of the adopted and saved CoS UDP policies B2 and H4, the guidelines in the Sunderland City Council (SCC) Residential Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (2008), policies H1 and BH1 of the emerging SCC Core Strategy and Development Plan 2015-2033 and the Framework. These refer to the importance of design, scale, massing and layout in relation to protecting and enhancing the locality.

Other Matters

13. I have taken into account representations from interested parties who have expressed concerns about highway safety, outlook, daylight, privacy, noise, housing needs, sustainability and flooding. These are all matters which do not affect my findings on the main issues which remain focused on the character

and appearance of the area. Likewise, I have considered the supportive representations in relation to regeneration of this area. However, these do not justify the harm I've already identified above.

14. I am aware that planning permission for extensions to both Nos 8 and 9 has been granted. I appreciate that this alternative position would increase the scale and massing of these existing buildings. However, it is not comparable, as it relates to extending the existing houses and not demolition and rebuild. Retention and extension would ensure elements of the character of the original buildings were retained. As such it attracts only minimal weight in my consideration of the merits of this appeal.

15. The appellant references the 'Seaburn Masterplan Area' as an example of strategic redevelopment of the seafront. However, this development is outside of the masterplan area and therefore of little relevance in this appeal.

Conclusion

16. For the reasons detailed above I conclude the appeal should be dismissed.

D Hilton-Brown

INSPECTOR