



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 15 October 2019

by Robert Hitchcock BSc DipCD MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 4th November 2019

Appeal Ref: APP/A2335/D/19/3232735

11 Africa Drive, Lancaster LA1 5TZ

- 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 Daniel Thompson against the decision of Lancaster City Council.
 - The application Ref 19/00468/FUL, dated 16 April 2019, was refused by notice dated 17 June 2019.
 - The development proposed is the creation of an area of hardstanding to front.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matter

2. The description of development appearing on the decision notice differs from that submitted on the original application form. For the avoidance of doubt, the description of development above is taken from the Council's decision notice as this provides a more concise description of the development.

Main Issue

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

Reasons

4. No 11 is a modern brick-built end terrace dwelling located on a corner plot within a recently completed residential estate. The estate is of mixed housing types and densities and subsequently vehicle parking is provided through a mixture of side driveways, forecourt parking and parking courts.
5. The housing within the estate generally has open frontages with a designed balance of hardstanding and landscaped areas. Many of the small pockets of grass and shrub planting are yet to mature, nonetheless, even at this early stage and when viewed together, these contribute significantly to the character of the area by providing soft interludes between the hard areas of roadway, pavements and driveways.
6. The area of proposed hardstanding would be located adjacent to the combined forecourt parking areas of nos 7 & 9 Africa Drive and on the inside corner of a 90 degree bend in the estate road. The outer corner is squared off to facilitate access to a parking court and therefore there is a high proportion of combined hard surfacing adjacent to the site.

7. The substantial loss of the landscaping and replacement with additional hardstanding would result in a combined wide and significant area of hard surfacing. Even with the retention of a small area of grass and paved edging, this would adversely affect the balance of hard and soft landscaping to create a somewhat sterile streetscape.
8. The landscaping contributes to the prevailing character of the locality and provides a visually attractive soft contrast to the adjoining areas of hardstanding. Although the design of the hardstanding would be consistent with other examples locally, this would not offset the harm to the streetscape. The erosion of green areas in favour of private vehicle parking would not be consistent with the aim of achieving well-designed places and would undermine the long-term quality of the local environment.
9. No 11 currently benefits from two off-street parking spaces which appears to reflect the general provision locally. I understand that the appellant wishes to facilitate additional parking availability for the family and avoid parking tension in the locality. Although the carriageway adjacent to the site is limited in width, there are no parking restrictions present and opportunities for on-street parking for visitors or additional vehicles were visible close by at the time of my site visit. Whilst this is only a snapshot in time, I am provided with little evidence demonstrating that parking levels across the estate are significantly lacking such that on-street parking is at a premium.
10. Furthermore, I have little doubt that other examples of hard standings created following the removal of front garden or landscape areas exist elsewhere. However, I am not provided with detail of specific examples relevant to the context of Africa Drive or the wider estate and therefore cannot attribute them significant weight in this appeal; an appeal that I have determined on its own merits.
11. The lack of third-party objections does not comprise a benefit in favour of the proposed development. Moreover, the presence of parkland and landscaping elsewhere within the estate, or problems of use of the grassed area by local cats, would not overcome the identified harm in the immediate vicinity of no 11.
12. For the above reasons, I conclude that the proposed development would conflict with Policy DM35 of the Local Plan for Lancaster District 2011-2031 (2014) and Section 12 of the National Planning Policy Framework which seek, amongst other things, that development makes a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the area.

Conclusion

13. The proposal conflicts with the development plan and there are no material considerations that outweigh this finding. For those reasons, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

R Hitchcock

INSPECTOR