



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 28 October 2019

by Jillian Rann BA (Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 08 November 2019

Appeal Ref: APP/P4605/W/19/3235818
169 Stechford Road, Birmingham B34 6AS

- 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 R James against the decision of Birmingham City Council.
 - The application Ref 2019/02722/PA, dated 28 March 2019, was refused by notice dated 14 June 2019.
 - The development proposed is erection of dwelling.
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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 appeal site and its surroundings.

Reasons

3. The appeal relates to the side garden of 169 Stechford Road, a semi-detached house at the junction of Stechford Road and Westbourne Avenue. In common with the semi-detached houses on the opposite side of the junction, No 169 and its adjoining neighbour sit at a diagonal angle in relation to the rows of houses on Stechford Road and Westbourne Avenue adjacent to them. Those four houses at the junction are therefore distinctive as a result of their wide side gardens, which provide a greater sense of separation between them and their neighbours than is characteristic of the more closely-spaced building frontages on those neighbouring streets.
4. I have been referred to other infill development in the vicinity. I also observed that houses nearby, and those in similar positions on other junctions further along Stechford Road have been extended in various forms, closing the gaps between them and their neighbours. However, in contrast, the appeal site those other houses on the junction of Westbourne Avenue have remained unextended, or have only low single storey extensions or outbuildings to the side. They have therefore maintained a sense of spaciousness and separation from their neighbours, and views through towards their rear garden planting, which combine to provide a pleasant sense of openness to this prominent corner, and relief from the closely-spaced built frontages on adjacent streets. Those wider side gardens of the properties around this junction, including the appeal site, therefore make a significant positive contribution to the street scene in their current form.

5. The proposed dwelling would be similar in appearance to other nearby properties, including with regard to its height, roof form and architectural detailing. Its long, blank side elevations would not be dissimilar to those of other houses in the wider street scene, and would largely be screened from view by adjacent buildings. Similarly, whilst its rear garden would be smaller than is generally characteristic of surrounding houses, that aspect of the development would not be readily visible from public vantage points, and it would still provide an adequately-sized garden for the proposed dwelling.
6. However, the development of the proposed dwelling on this wide side garden area would result in the removal of the existing gap between No 169 and its neighbour at 171 Stechford Road. It would therefore appear as a discordant and unduly cramped addition, which would significantly erode the sense of separation between those properties and the views towards their open rear gardens beyond. The development would therefore significantly diminish the sense of openness and space around the existing building and within the site, and thus the positive contribution that the site makes to the character and appearance of this prominent corner and the wider street scene at present.
7. I therefore conclude that the proposed development would have an adverse effect on the character and appearance of the appeal site and its surroundings. It would therefore conflict with Policies PG3 and TP27 of the Birmingham Development Plan and paragraph 3.14D of the Birmingham Unitary Development Plan which, amongst other things, require new development to create a strong sense of place and reinforce local distinctiveness, with high design quality that responds to the local area context, and state that the Council will have particular regard towards the impact that development would have on the local character of an area.
8. The proposal would also conflict with the aims of the Council's Places for Living Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG), Places for All SPG and Mature Suburbs: Guidelines to Control Residential Intensification Supplementary Planning Document, which reinforce and provide further detailed guidance with regard to the design and character aims of those development plan policies.

Other Matters

9. The development would provide a new detached dwelling in an existing residential area, close to local retail and community facilities and public transport links. It would therefore contribute to local housing supply and provide variety in housing choice in an area of predominantly semi-detached housing. I have also had regard to the energy saving measures proposed. However, those benefits arising from the single dwelling proposed would be very modest, and would not outweigh the significant harm to character and appearance that I have identified in this instance.

Conclusion

10. For the reasons given, and having regard to all other matters raised, the appeal is dismissed.

Jillian Rann
INSPECTOR