



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 4 September 2019

by L Crouch BA (Hons) MSc IHBC

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 25th November 2019

Appeal Ref: APP/T0355/W/19/3231286
31-33 Belmont Road, Maidenhead SL6 6JL

- 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 Leon Tusz (Developments) Ltd against the decision of the Council of the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead.
 - The application Ref 18/02163, dated 20 July 2018, was refused by notice dated 6 March 2019.
 - The development proposed is the erection of two two-storey terraces of three dwellings with access, parking and amenity space.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Application for costs

2. An application for costs was made by Leon Tusz (Developments) Ltd against the Council of the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead. This application is the subject of a separate Decision.

Procedural Matters

3. The application plans were revised while the scheme was with the Council for consideration. The Council's determination was based on drawing no. P1_C-1107-P2018. I have considered the scheme on the same basis.

Main Issues

4. The main issues are the effect of the development on the character and appearance of the area and on highway safety.

Reasons

Character and Appearance

5. The appeal site is located on the southern side of Belmont Road and is vacant and overgrown. This appearance contrasts with neighbouring sections of the southern side of the road which is more built up and is largely comprised of semi-detached and detached dwellings. These dwellings have a predominantly linear front building line, and they are largely regularly spaced. They have open frontages, with varying forms of division between the plots, and small-scale areas of hardstanding, which are interspersed with areas of planting. The planting helps to soften the surrounding built form and provides a leafy street scene.

6. The Council within the Officer's Report states that the area has been identified in the 'RBWM Townscape Assessment (TA) as part of an Inter-War Suburb.' The Council goes on to state the TA indicates that its 'leafy suburban character is reinforced by well-vegetated domestic front gardens with ornamental shrubs, bounded by low brick walls and clipped hedges, views are channelled down streets, framed by regular facades of houses'. I saw that this is the case in the vicinity of the appeal site.
7. Proposals for housing on the site have previously been permitted and as such it is agreed that the site is acceptable in principle for development and is in a location close to transport and services. However, an appeal¹ from 2018 has previously been dismissed for 7 one-bedroom dwellings on the site due to harm to the character and appearance of the area. The harm found related to the proposed three dwellings to the rear of the plot due to back-land development.
8. The proposal now at appeal is for 2 two-storey terraces of 3 dwellings. These two units are proposed in a staggered, set back location behind the well-established largely linear building line of neighbouring dwellings on the southern side of the road. An expanse of hardstanding is proposed to the front of the site, with limited soft landscaping along the sides and to the front. Twelve tandem car parking spaces are proposed, along with bin storage, in a submitted revised plan to serve the development.
9. The proposed two buildings by being staggered and significantly set back behind the established building line would introduce an area of built form in a position that is uncharacteristic of the generally well-established linear grain of development on the southern side of the road. The development would appear harmfully at odds with the layout, pattern and rhythm of the row by introducing an area of built form which poorly relates to and breaks up the characterful building line. This would prove incongruous to the area's character and appearance as it would be clearly seen in views from Belmont Road and Hargrave Road.
10. The proposal through the mirroring design of the two buildings, with a single off-centre front door and porch to each building, largely symmetrical façade and lack of front dividing boundaries demarking the units, would result in the development appearing as two large buildings within a large single plot. This scale, form and appearance would not reflect the predominantly tight knit character of the southern side of Belmont Road, which is mostly represented by semi-detached and detached individual and regular dwellings with their own individual frontages. The proposed design, despite its gable features and pitched roofs, is lacking in the architectural details of the area, such as chimneys and combination of building materials. This gives the development a blank appearance and does not relate successfully to, nor respect, the character and appearance of the area.
11. It is noted that there would be a comparable gap between neighbouring dwellings to others found along the road and the ridge height would be comparable with neighbouring dwellings, with a lower height than previously permitted. However, despite these aspects, the overall scale of development would harmfully cover the majority of the width of the site, which would present an uncharacteristic swathe of built form across the expanse of the site, appearing as two large individual detached dwellings rather than two dwellings

¹ Appeal reference APP/T0355/W/17/3185403

- of three dwellings, leading to an over-developed appearance. This scale of built form would appear uncharacteristic when viewed within its context of semi-detached and detached dwellings, which are generally of a smaller scale, particularly in relation to their width.
12. This over-developed appearance when combined with the disproportionately large detached appearance, would be out of keeping with the character and appearance of the southern side of the road. This is highlighted by the relatively narrow width of the proposed gardens, which are not consistent with existing garden widths in Belmont Road and are out of character with the established grain of development. Although these garden widths are not visible from the main road, they form part of the spatial pattern of the area and they are indicative of the over-development of the site.
 13. This over-developed appearance would be exacerbated by the expanse of hard surfacing which is being proposed to the front of the site, the proposed 12 tandem car parking spaces and the limited soft landscaping. The 12 tandem car parking spaces and bin store would result in significant formal surface coverage to the front and an expanse of cars parked prominently adjacent to the street frontage. This would give a cluttered appearance, visually intensifying the over-development of the site. This would be harmfully out of keeping with the character and appearance of the area, which predominantly consists of small-scale driveways.
 14. I am aware that the appellant has provided an earlier layout showing 6 parking spaces, which is less dense and would have a lesser effect on the character and appearance and would be more acceptable, with an element of landscaping to the front of the buildings. I consider the relevant parking standards in the following section.
 15. I recognise that there is some variance over the quantum of hardstanding to the south of the road. However, these other driveways serve individual dwellings where the number of vehicles is relatively low, retaining the open character and reducing the prominence within the street scene. Whilst the proposed landscaping could screen some of this within the appeal site, it would only be limited given the extent of hard surfacing, and it would remain apparent and incongruous in the street scene.
 16. The appellant asserts that the proposed buildings would have an identical built frontage width to the road as the semi-detached dwellings to the immediate east, that the overall width of 'plot' associated with each building would also reflect those to the east. However, the dwellings to the east have a distinctly semi-detached character, with strong boundaries demarking each dwelling to the front giving individual identity, as opposed to two detached buildings with no front division as proposed, so they do not represent direct comparisons.
 17. The appellant also states that the dwelling to the west of the appeal site is set back and is 'directly comparable' to these plots, and I accept that this is not significantly harmful. However, the harm from the unacceptable over-developed and uncharacteristic large detached appearance I find to be overriding in this case.
 18. I note that the applicant states that the proposed depth and extent of soft landscaping across the site frontage would be similar to a previous planning

permission². However, that scheme did allow for a greater amount of planting within the immediate front gardens of the dwellings, which would have allowed for softening to the built form. Additional landscaping within the previous scheme was also shown to the west side of the parking, therefore it is materially different. In any event, I must consider the proposal before me primarily on its own merits.

19. I conclude that the proposal would cause unacceptable harm to the character and appearance of the area. Therefore, the proposed development would be contrary to Policies DG1, H10 and H11 of the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead Local Plan Adopted 1999 including Adopted Alterations 2003 (LP). These policies seek that new development shall be compatible with regards to scale and established street façade, with high standards of design. Additionally, the development would be contrary to the National Planning Policy Framework's 2019 (the Framework) clear emphasis on good design.
20. The proposal would also be contrary to Policy SP2 of the Borough Local Plan Submission Version 2018, which requires development to contribute positively to the places in which they are located. However, as this is an emerging policy yet to go through examination, I cannot give it full weight.

Highway Safety

21. The appellant is applying for 12 spaces to meet the maximum car parking standard. However, the appellant believes that 6 parking spaces, applying the reduced standard, should be sufficient at this site as they consider it an accessible site and have drawn comparisons to another site elsewhere at No 16 Belmont Road³, which had a reduced parking standard. The Highways Authority (HA) suggests that the site is an 'inaccessible' location being around 1.3km walk away from Maidenhead train station as stipulated within the Council's Parking Strategy 2004. However, the planning permission at nearby No 16 Belmont Road was described as being 'within an area of good accessibility' being located around 600m from the railway station Furze Platt. No 16 was also served by two bus routes. The appeal site is a short distance away from No 16 along Belmont Road. Therefore, given the similarities in edge of town location and proximity to services I do not consider the site to be inaccessible. Therefore, I consider the reduced standard requiring 6 parking spaces to be sufficient in this case.
22. The Council is concerned about the increased usage of the sub-standard visibility splay, which they consider to be a result of the proposal. However, given the reduced standard of 6 parking spaces I consider the vehicle movements to be comparable to the extant permission, which had a similar number of parking spaces. I therefore do not consider this to be harmful on this matter.
23. The Council states that it has not been demonstrated that the proposal would not lead to additional on-street parking in the area which in its view would have a detrimental impact on the free flow of traffic and therefore conditions of highway safety. However, due to the accessible location a number of trips would be made using non-private vehicle modes of transport, there is sufficient parking on site to meet the parking standards and therefore there should not

² Council's reference 15/02671

³ Council ref: 17/03098/FULL

be un-due pressure on parking on the road. However, should there be some over-spill parking onto the road this would be minor, and I do not consider this to be harmful due to the quiet nature of the road, the unrestricted parking in the vicinity, mainly straight sections of road, plus restrictions at most junctions to ensure visibility. This would therefore not have an unacceptable harmful impact on the free flow of traffic or highway safety.

24. I therefore conclude that the proposal would not cause unacceptable harm to highway safety. Therefore, the proposed development complies with Policies T5, P4 and DG1 of the LP. These policies collectively seek to ensure that new development does not place undue burden or create problems with the highway network and provides adequate vehicle access.

Conclusion

25. I have concluded that there would be harm to the character and appearance of the area which would be significant and long lasting. I have also found that the development is acceptable in relation to highway safety. However, this does not outweigh the harm that I have identified and therefore for the reasons above I conclude that the appeal be dismissed.

L Crouch

INSPECTOR