
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 22 October 2019

by M Cryan BA(Hons) DipTP MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 29 November 2019

Appeal Ref: APP/Q4625/W/19/3234415
30 Amberley Road, Solihull B92 7NP

- 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 James Goddard against the decision of Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council.
 - The application Ref PL/2019/00748/PPFL, dated 17 March 2019, was refused by notice dated 31 May 2019.
 - The development proposed is a 2-storey dwelling attached to the side of 30 Amberley Road.
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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. 30 Amberley Road is the end property of a terrace of four houses in an established residential area. Houses on the street are arranged either as semi-detached pairs or in groups of four, usually with small gaps between adjacent blocks. There is a strong sense of rhythm and uniformity within the street scene arising from the symmetrical nature of the buildings and the consistent layout. Reasonably generous front gardens give the street an open spacious feel, although many are now hard surfaced for car parking. Gaps between properties make a positive contribution to the street scene by allowing glimpses of mature trees and greenery behind the houses. They are therefore particularly important features at the ends of the street and at corners.
4. No 30 is sited on a wedge-shaped plot on the inside of a bend in the street. Consequently it has a broad street frontage, and the gap between it and No 28 is wider than others in the area. Rather than a bridging point between two independent street scenes, the appeal site is at a point in the street from where much of Amberley Road can be seen and its consistency of layout and style appreciated.
5. The proposed development would sub-divide the plot, and a new two-storey house attached to No 30 would be built to fill the space between Nos 28 and 30. Splitting the appeal site would create two very small rear gardens which

would be uncharacteristically small and awkwardly shaped compared to the generally spacious nature of the area's gardens. The proposed dwelling would be shallower than the neighbouring houses, with a roof ridge at a markedly lower height than the existing property to which it would be attached. In these regards, the proposed development would read more as a domestic extension than a self-contained new dwelling. Infilling the entire gap between Nos 28 and 30 would close off views of the mature trees at the rear, and would make for a much harsher street scene at the corner of the road than at present.

6. These factors taken together mean that the proposed dwelling would read as a poorly-designed development which would appear cramped and contrived in its setting, and which would be unsympathetic to the prevailing character of the area. While the hipped roof, front bay window and choice of materials for the house would reflect the form and details of the surrounding buildings, this would not mitigate the other harm I have found.
7. I therefore conclude that the proposal would be harmful to the character and appearance of the area. It would conflict with Policies P5 and P15 of the 2013 Solihull Local Plan, which among other things require new housing development to be well-designed, and to respect and enhance local character including regarding scale and layout. For the same reasons it would conflict with the requirements of Section 12 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework), which seek to encourage good design.

Planning balance

8. The Council's officer report acknowledged that it could not demonstrate a 5 year supply of housing land, but its appeal statement indicates that it now can, albeit by a very small margin. There would be limited social and economic benefits associated with the construction and occupation of a new dwelling in a location which has good access to services. The appellant indicates that the proposed dwelling would be intended as a small starter home, of which there is an undersupply locally. However one house would make a minimal contribution to meeting any housing shortfall, whether of starter homes or more generally.
9. On the other hand, I have identified that there would be significant harm to the character and appearance of the area. I therefore conclude that, even if I were to apply the 'tilted balance' in favour of granting permission described in paragraph 11 of the Framework, the adverse impacts of the proposal would significantly and demonstrably outweigh its limited benefits. The proposal would not represent the sustainable development envisaged by the Framework.

Conclusion

10. I have found that the proposal conflicts with the development plan and there are no other considerations, including the advice of the Framework, to outweigh this conflict. For this reason, the appeal is dismissed.

M Cryan

Inspector