



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 11 November 2019

by Rachael Pipkin, BA (Hons), MPhil, MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 19th December 2019

Appeal Ref: APP/N1160/W/19/3222904

Land/Garage Site r/o 15-59 Randwick Park Road, Plymouth, PL9 7QN

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant outline planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mr K Khan of Green Form Design against the decision of Plymouth City Council.
 - The application Ref: 18/00710/OUT dated 19 April 2018, was refused by notice dated 12 November 2018.
 - The development proposed is outline application to redevelop land/garage site r/o 15-59 Randwick Park Road with 4 new dwellings.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matters

2. Although not included on the application form, it is evident that the postcode of the site is PL9 7QN. I have therefore included it in the address set out above.
3. The application was made in outline with all matters reserved for future determination. I have had regard to the indicative layout for 4 dwellings shown on the submitted drawings in reaching my decision.
4. Since the application was determined, the Plymouth and South West Devon Joint Local Plan 2019 (JLP) has been adopted by the Council and the policies therein can now be afforded full weight in decision making. The Plymouth Core Strategy policies CS02, CS28 and CS34 as cited in the Council's decision notice have been replaced by Policies DEV10, DEV20 and DEV29. It is evident that all the parties have had an opportunity to comment on the implications of the new plan on the proposal and I have determined the appeal accordingly.
5. The original application proposed the demolition of 16 of the existing garages with 14 to be retained. During the application process, amended plans were submitted to the Council showing the removal of all 30 garages on the site. However, the Council did not accept this amendment and it has not been the subject of consultation with third parties. In these circumstances the interests of the Council and other parties would be prejudiced if I were to take the revised drawings into account in my decision. I have therefore determined the appeal on the basis of the plans referred to in the Council's decision notice.

Main Issues

6. The main issues are:

- whether or not a safe and suitable access could be provided; and
- the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the surrounding area.

Reasons

Highway safety

7. The appeal site is a back land location occupied by 30 garages. It is accessed via a single-track, unmade accessway between the boundary wall and fence of 13 and 15 Randwick Park Road (Nos 13 and 15). The accessway extends back some way from the highway and turns a corner into the main area of garages. It also provides access to a dwelling at the far end of the site, 58a Plymstock Road and access to a garage within the rear garden of 30 Plymstock Road.
8. Due to the narrowness of the access and the height of the adjacent boundary treatments which extend up to the back edge of the highway, visibility for vehicles emerging from the accessway is severely restricted. In order to see approaching vehicles or pedestrians, drivers need to pull out onto the footway. It would not meet the minimum requirements set out in the Manual for Streets. The visibility from this access is therefore substandard.
9. The introduction of 4 dwellings would fundamentally change the way in which the access would be used. A residential use would have regular comings and goings throughout the day including vehicle and pedestrian movements and deliveries. With the change in nature of the use of the access, the lack of an appropriate visibility splay would significantly increase the risk of conflict between highway users. Furthermore, with a long, narrow access the provision of passing spaces is essential. This access does not have any and would therefore lead to potential conflicts which would be unacceptable and contrary to the highway authority's requirements.
10. There is insufficient width for a footway. The space would have to be shared, leading to unacceptable conflicts between vehicles and pedestrians. These would be more serious if involving the young, the elderly or anyone handling a large item, such as a wheelie bin. Furthermore, there is no space for placing bins in readiness for collections which would be essential as no refuse vehicle could enter the site.
11. The appellant has referred me to a previous dismissed appeal¹ for 9 bungalows on the site. However, in that case an entirely different access was proposed, and it is not therefore directly comparable to the scheme before me now.
12. Since the appellant has been unable to quantify how the access is currently being used, it has not been possible to carry out any meaningful assessment as to whether 4 houses would generate more or less vehicular movements. In any event, most properties along Randwick Park Road have off-street parking on driveways in addition to existing on-street parking. It therefore seems unlikely that local residents would require the existing garages for parking and that they are most likely to be using them for purposes of domestic storage. It

¹ APP/N1160/A/08/2084112/NWF

therefore seems highly probable that the redevelopment of the site for residential purposes would give rise to a more intensive use of the access.

13. I am aware that there have not been any recorded accidents in the vicinity of the existing access. However, I have found the existing access does not provide adequate visibility or space for the associated vehicle and pedestrian movements associated with a development of 4 dwellings. Neither the lack of accidents to date nor the existence of other substandard accesses along Randwick Park Road would therefore justify the use of the access for the proposed development.
14. Whilst the proposal at this stage is in outline with access to be determined as part of any reserved matters, I am not satisfied, based on the indicative drawings, that a suitable access could be provided on land in the appellant's ownership without it giving rise to an unacceptable risk of conflict between road users. This leads me to conclude that the proposed development would fail to provide safe and suitable access for all users. It would therefore conflict with Policy DEV29 of the JLP which requires development to provide safe and satisfactory access to the site.

Character and appearance

15. The appeal site is a long, narrow strip of land between the rear gardens of properties fronting Randwick Park Road and Plymstock Road. The area is characterised by traditional, two-storey semi-detached houses with modestly sized rear gardens. A few houses have single-storey garages within their rear gardens facing onto the appeal site. A detached house, No. 58a, occupies a plot at the far end of the appeal site.
16. The existing garages on the site are of no architectural merit and the site makes little contribution to the character and appearance of the area. Its redevelopment for housing could improve the appearance of the site.
17. However, while the layout is reserved for future determination, alternative options are likely to be limited by the narrowness of the site and the appellant's desire to maximise its southerly facing aspect. The indicative plans illustrate contemporary bungalows set in wide and shallow rectangular plots, each with a parking space.
18. Providing four small and single-storey houses is one possible way of providing that quantum of development within the limited confines of this long and narrow site. However, given the highly constrained shape and size of the site I would need to be certain that this could be achieved in a manner that would be appropriate given the context of the surrounding development. In the absence of firm details regarding the precise size and scale of the proposed dwellings and a layout that was able to demonstrate satisfactory parking and turning spaces, suitable amenity areas and adequate landscaping, I am not persuaded that the development would function effectively without harm to the local environment.
19. I therefore conclude that the proposal would be harmful to the character and appearance of the surrounding area and would fail to comply with Policies DEV10 and DEV20 of the JLP. These policies together seek high quality design that protects and improves the quality of the built environment.

Planning Balance and Conclusion

20. The Government is seeking to significantly boost the supply of housing. Since this site is previously developed land within the urban area of Plymouth there is no objection in principle to residential development of the site. The determining factor is whether this can be achieved in a satisfactory manner having regard to highway safety and the surrounding environment.
21. The provision of 4 small houses would provide limited social, economic and environmental benefits. However, I am not satisfied that the site could be provided with a safe and suitable access to serve 4 dwellings that would be appropriate for all the users of the site. Consequently, the proposal is unacceptable, and this would be a sufficient reason alone to dismiss the appeal. I am not persuaded that the quantum of development proposed could be provided on the site without harm to the local environment.
22. I therefore conclude that the proposal would be contrary to the development plan and there are no other considerations that outweigh this conflict. For this reason, the appeal should be dismissed.

Rachael Pipkin

INSPECTOR