



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 25 February 2020

by S Edwards MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 26 March 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/E0345/W/19/3241189

33 The Horse Close, Emmer Green, Reading, Berkshire, England RG4 8TT

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mr F Doka against the decision of Reading Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 181038, dated 7 June 2018, was refused by notice dated 23 August 2019.
 - The development proposed is demolition of existing bungalow, two replacement detached dwellings.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matters

2. Since the determination of the application, the Reading Borough Local Plan (LP) has been formally adopted by the Council on 4 November 2019. The policies contained within this document supersede all existing development plans in Reading, including the Reading Borough LDF Core Strategy and the Sites and Detailed Policies Document. I have therefore determined the appeal in accordance with the most relevant and recently adopted policies. The parties have had the opportunity to comment on these as part of the appeal process.

Main Issues

3. The main issues are:
 - The effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area;
 - The effect of the proposal on the living conditions of the neighbouring occupiers of no 34 The Horse Close (no 34), with particular regard to outlook; and
 - Whether the proposal would make adequate provision for affordable housing.

Reasons

Character and appearance

4. Located within an area of primarily residential character, the appeal site comprises a bungalow, which is framed by attached garages either side, and has been extended to the rear. The surrounding area includes dwellings of different types and designs, but which nevertheless share a similar front building line and sit within plots of a similar width. Despite the apparent lack of uniformity amongst the properties, the pattern of development and degree of

spacing between the buildings, particularly above ground floor level, provides a degree of consistency to the street scene.

5. The proposal would entail the subdivision of the appeal site into two separate plots which, having particular regard to their width, would appear at odds with the established pattern of development within the Close. The two-storey dwellings, by being built within proximity to each other and their respective side boundaries, would appear squeezed into these narrow plots, resulting in a cramped form of development which would have a detrimental impact on the street scene. The harm identified would also be exemplified by the removal of the entire form of boundary treatment on the site's frontage to make way for the provision of car parking required as part of the development.
6. It is clear that the proposal sought to replicate the proportions and to some extent the design features of the adjacent property at no 32 The Horse Close. However, this property sits within a noticeably wider plot compared with the appeal scheme, and presently benefits from the degree of spacing provided by the appeal site, above the existing garage, which would be eroded as a result of the proposal.
7. For the foregoing reasons, the proposal would unacceptably harm the character and appearance of the area, and would therefore conflict with LP Policy CC7, which requires all developments to be of a high design quality that maintains and enhances the character and appearance of the area of Reading in which it is located.

Living conditions

8. The dwelling shown as 'house 1' would be built along the rear boundary of no 34. The flank wall of this two-storey dwelling would sit approximately 1 metre away from the boundary shared with this neighbouring property at the nearest point. The overall height of the wall and pitched roof, combined with the depth of this elevation, would be substantial, resulting in a form of development which would appear oppressive and overbearing to the occupiers of no 34. This would be detrimental to their living conditions, particularly in respect of the enjoyment of their rear garden.
9. The appellant insists that the living conditions of these neighbouring residents would not be adversely affected, as the distance between the rear elevation of no 34 and the side elevation of the proposed dwelling would exceed 10 metres. Although this measurement does not account for the conservatory situated to the rear elevation of no 34, the concerns raised by the Council primarily relate to the effect of the development on the use of the outdoor area by the occupiers of this neighbouring property. Additionally, whilst the side elevation of 'house 1' would not include any windows serving habitable rooms, this would not outweigh the harm to the outlook which would be caused by the appeal scheme.
10. I therefore conclude on this issue that the proposal would have a harmful effect on the living conditions of the occupiers of no 34, with particular regard to outlook. It would therefore not accord with LP Policy CC8 which seeks to ensure that development proposals will not cause a detrimental impact on the living environment of existing residential properties, notably in terms of outlook.

Affordable Housing

11. LP Policy H3 requires residential development to make an appropriate contribution towards affordable housing to meet the needs of Reading. The policy adds that on sites of 1-4 dwellings, a financial contribution equivalent of 10% of the housing to be provided as affordable housing elsewhere in the Borough will be required. The appellant has confirmed that the level of contribution required as part of the development would be acceptable. Although the appellant has agreed to enter into a legal agreement to secure this financial contribution, there is however no planning obligation before me.
12. In the absence of a duly completed legal agreement or unilateral undertaking, the proposed development would fail to make adequate provision for affordable housing. It would subsequently conflict with LP Policy H3 and the Council's Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document (adopted July 2013).

Conclusion

13. For the reasons detailed above, and having regard to all other matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

S Edwards

INSPECTOR