The Planning Inspectorate

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 20 May 2020

by R Morgan MCD MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 10 June 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/Q4245/W/20/3246257
28 Craig Avenue, Flixton, Manchester M41 5PT

- 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 Gutteridge against the decision of Trafford Borough Council.
- The application Ref 98459/FUL/19, dated 25 July 2019, was refused by notice dated 5 December 2019.
- The development proposed is demolition of 1no existing dwellinghouse and replacement with one pair of semi-detached dwellings with associated amenity space.

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. The appeal site is located in a residential area of Urmston, on the corner of Craig Avenue, Handel Avenue and Clifton Road. These streets are fairly narrow and tree lined, giving the area a green and intimate character. The majority of houses are semi-detached and are set back from the street behind front gardens.

4. The triangular shaped appeal site is occupied by an L-shaped detached bungalow, which is well set back within the plot, and is largely hidden from view by a high hedge and street trees. As a result, the site provides something of a green gap in a prominent corner location, which contributes positively to the character of this built up area.

5. The gap would be eroded to a large extent by the proposed replacement of the bungalow with a pair of semi detached houses. Furthermore, the replacement of the boundary hedge with a wall and driveways would significantly reduce the verdant character of the site.

6. The proposed houses would front onto Craig Avenue and would be of a similar scale, form and materials to the surrounding properties with adequate off road parking and private amenity space. The houses would be set back some 4 metres from the back of the pavement, which would be around a metre closer to the street than the predominant building line along Craig Avenue. The nearest houses on either side are some distance away so the difference in the

building line would not be overly obvious. However, the surrounding front gardens are already fairly short in depth, and by reducing the garden size further, the proposed houses would appear overly dominant in the street, compared with the neighbouring properties. The corner position of the site would contribute to the prominence of the proposed development.

7. The design of the existing bungalow is sympathetic to its corner location, with gables fronting onto the key elevations to Craig Avenue. These gables form an enclosing feature at the end of the street, particularly when approaching from the north. This would be replaced in the proposed scheme by views of the corners of the houses with largely blank side elevations. As a result, the proposal would detract from, rather than maintain or enhance, the character and appearance of the area.

8. Although the proposed houses would be no closer to Handel Avenue than the existing bungalow, they would appear significantly more prominent as a result of their greater height. The houses would be positioned at an angle to Handel Avenue, with one of the corners in close proximity to the side elevation of the adjacent property, 1 Handel Avenue. This siting would appear awkward in relation to No 1, and to the other houses in the street, all of which face directly onto Handel Avenue.

9. During the appeal, amended plans were submitted showing revisions to the detailing on the front elevations. I agree that, despite a slightly awkward relationship between the front door and upstairs window position, the addition of bay windows, brick detailing and arched front doors would improve the appearance of the dwellings and enable them to better reflect the character of the surrounding houses. However, these improvements would not be sufficient to overcome the harm to the character and appearance of the area which I have identified. Furthermore, the addition of front bay windows would further reduce the front garden space, which would add to the prominence of the houses in the street.

10. I conclude that the proposed development would cause harm to the character and appearance of the area. It would conflict with Policy L7.1 of the Trafford Local Plan Core Strategy 2012 which, amongst other considerations, requires development to be appropriate in its context and to enhance the street scene or character of the area. There is further conflict with paragraphs 124 and 127 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) regarding the need for good design and for developments to be sympathetic to local character.

11. I note the reference to the Trafford Planning Guidelines on New Residential Development 2004 in the Council's decision notice, but I have found no areas of particular conflict with this document. Paragraph 2.4, which is referenced by the Council, relates to the development of small vacant sites or the retention of buildings and construction of new dwellings within their garden areas, so does not specifically apply to the appeal proposal.

12. For the reasons given above, the proposal fails to comply with the development plan. However, the Council acknowledges that it cannot demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing sites at the current time. Paragraph 11 of the Framework directs that where the policies which are most important for determining an application are out-of-date because a five-year land supply cannot be demonstrated, planning permission should be granted unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the

benefits, when assessed against the policies in the Framework taken as a whole.

13. The amount of weight to be given to development plan policies is a matter of planning judgement for the decision maker. Being out of date does not mean that a policy carries no weight. The expectations for design quality set out in Policy L7 are consistent with the requirements of section 12 of the Framework which seeks to achieve well designed places. As such, I have afforded Policy L7 a significant amount of weight.

14. Paragraph 8 of the Framework outlines the overarching interdependent objectives for planning to achieve sustainable development: social, economic and environmental.

15. In terms of the social benefits, the scheme would provide one additional dwelling, which would contribute to the borough's housing requirement, albeit in a small way. The site is located close to local services and facilities including public transport. In addition to these social benefits, there would be a modest economic benefit relating to construction and future residents' support for local services. These benefits are limited by the small amount of development involved, but nevertheless carry modest weight favour of the proposal.

16. Turning to the environmental objective, I note the appellant's comments that the site would not be affected by flood risk and there would be no ecological constraints. These factors represent a lack of harm, rather than a benefit, and carry neutral weight in the planning balance. However, for the reasons identified, significant harm would be caused to the character and appearance of the area, and as a result the environmental role of sustainable development would not be achieved.

17. Overall, I find that the adverse impacts of the proposed development would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits when assessed against the policies in the Framework when taken as a whole. Therefore, the proposal would not represent sustainable development. The conflict with the development plan is not outweighed by other considerations, including the Framework.

Conclusion

18. For the reasons given, I conclude that the appeal be dismissed.

R Morgan

INSPECTOR