
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 3 August 2020

by Paul Thompson DipTRP MAUD MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 26 August 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/F2415/W/20/3253759

Land opposite 10 Harrod Drive, Market Harborough LE16 7EH

- 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 & Mrs Vipul Pabari against the decision of Harborough District Council.
 - The application Ref 19/01900/FUL, dated 3 December 2019, was refused by notice dated 13 May 2020.
 - The development proposed is to remove the existing storage shed and replace with 1.5 storey 2 flat (1 bed each) dwelling with off road parking and communal side garden.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Application for costs

2. An application for costs was made by Mr & Mrs Vipul Pabari against Harborough District Council. This application is the subject of a separate Decision.

Procedural Matters

3. Despite the description of development set out above, I consider the description found on the Decision Notice and the Appeal Form better reflects the scheme that is before me and that which the Council considered. The development proposed is therefore for 'removal of existing storage shed and erection of 2 dwellings with off road parking and communal side garden'. I have therefore dealt with the appeal on this basis.

Main Issue

4. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of Harrod Drive.

Reasons

5. The appeal site is situated within a residential cul-de-sac predominantly formed of pairs of two-storey semi-detached houses, but with one detached property halfway along. Although some of the dwellings have been altered, their layout and appearance remains coherent. Moreover, the houses incorporate large windows to front façades, including the ground floor. They are also arranged parallel but set back from the street frontage with predominantly open garden and hardstanding areas, and rear gardens of varying depth. The southern side of the cul-de-sac is divided into two narrow areas of land, the parcel to the east

- is a parking area enclosed to the street by a low wall and hedge and to the rear by mature trees, it appears to serve 21 Great Bowden Road.
6. The site concerns the parcel of land to the west, which is roughly rectangular in shape, but tapers slightly towards 22 Harrod Drive. It is currently occupied by a parking area and domestic wooden garage/shed. Given its low scale and largely utilitarian appearance, the garage/shed has an unassuming presence within the street scene. Nevertheless, as the front boundary of the site is either open or defined by a low wall, the site is highly visible within the locality, including from Great Bowden Road. The backdrop of the trees to each of these parcels of land also creates a verdant character which contrasts with the open frontages of the houses opposite.
 7. Taken together, these features make a significant contribution to the character and appearance of Harrod Drive.
 8. The proposed building would not incorporate front or rear garden areas and would be aligned with the back edge of the carriageway to the front and partly overhang the boundary to the rear. The entrances to the proposed dwellings would be to the east of the building, adjacent to two parking spaces and a bin store, whilst to the western end there would be a communal space for the future occupiers, albeit this would not be directly accessible from the dwellings.
 9. The proposed dwellings would be arranged separately over two floors, with the first floor accommodated in the roof space, the eaves of which would be raised up to provide internal headspace. At ground floor, the front façade would incorporate four narrow high-level horizontal glazed apertures set within a feature panel. There would also be two high-level roof lights in the front roof slope. By contrast, the rear façade would be detailed with two projecting window features, partly in the roof, the larger of which would extend to the ground floor.
 10. I appreciate that the characteristics of the site mean that a conventional layout similar to the other houses found in Harrod Drive would not be achievable and the proposal would utilise a carefully selected palette of materials that would be sympathetic within the surrounding area. Nevertheless, the proposal would occupy a significant portion of the site and the space remaining around the building would be noticeably smaller than the existing houses. The proposal would therefore jar with the established grain of development described above, particularly the consistent spacing and layout of houses, which would be harmful to the character of Harrod Drive.
 11. I also note that the height of the proposed building would be lower than the existing surrounding houses, so the proposal would not be a dominant feature in the street scene, and the appearance has been designed to minimise the impact of windows facing directly across the street. Nonetheless, the external appearance of the proposal would be uncharacteristic of Harrod Drive, as it would incorporate a largely blank façade with very small window apertures, so would principally turn its back on the street. The entrance doors and window serving the stairs to first floor dwelling, which would be visible from the west along Harrod Drive, would provide further animation within the street but the appearance of the proposal within the street scene would still largely be one of a predominantly solid appearance. Furthermore, the proposal would also require the removal of a number of mature trees that positively contribute to the street scene. The proposed development would therefore represent a

strident built incursion that would be harmful to the appearance of Harrod Drive.

12. I have had regard to paragraphs 117 and 118 of the National Planning Policy Framework. In particular, the latter requires that planning decisions give substantial weight to the value of using suitable brownfield land within settlements for homes and other identified needs. However, paragraph 122 of the Framework is clear that making efficient use of land should include taking into account the desirability of maintaining an area's prevailing character and the importance of securing well-designed, attractive and healthy places.
13. For the reasons outlined above, I conclude that the proposed development would have an unacceptably harmful effect on the character and appearance of the area. Hence, the proposal would not accord with Policy GD8 (b) and (d) of the Harborough Local Plan 2011 to 2031 (Adopted 30 April 2019) (the LP). Together, these parts of the policy suggest that development will be permitted where it achieves a high standard of design, including where appropriate, being individual and innovative, yet sympathetic to the local vernacular; and respecting the context and characteristics of the individual site, street scene and the wider local environment to ensure that it is integrated as far as possible into the existing built form.
14. I have not found against part (e) of Policy GD8 of the LP, as this relates to living conditions and it does not appear that the Council had any concerns in this respect.

Other Matters

15. The appellant submitted the proposal following pre-application advice¹. The Framework stresses the benefits of early engagement and of good quality pre-application discussion. Whilst I am mindful that this is not binding, in any event, I have considered the individual merits of the proposal afresh and any positive feedback given in respect of any matters does not warrant allowing this appeal.
16. I note that the proposed development would be accessible to the services and facilities available within the town centre, including the railway station and bus stops and the Council has not identified any harm in respect of other technical matters raised through the planning application. Nevertheless, these matters would not alter or outweigh my conclusion on the main issue.

Conclusion

17. For the reasons given above, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Paul Thompson

INSPECTOR

¹ Planning Reference: PREAPP/19/00190.