
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 20 July 2020 by Hilary Senior BA (Hons) MCD MRTPI

by Susan Ashworth BA (Hons) BPL MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government

Decision date: 9 September 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/M4320/W/3251212

8 Dowhills Road, Crosby, L23 8SN

- 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 Paul Barr against the decision of Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council.
 - The application Ref DC/2019/02435, dated 24 December 2019, was refused by notice dated 26 March 2020.
 - The development proposed is new two storey, two bedroom detached dwellinghouse.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Appeal Procedure

2. The site visit was undertaken by an Appeal Planning Officer whose recommendation is set out below and to which the Inspector has had regard before deciding the appeal.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

4. 8 Dowhills Road is a large, detached, corner dwelling with frontages on both Dowhills Road and Elton Avenue, set back from the road with garden areas behind a low brick wall and hedge. The area immediately around the appeal site is generally characterised by large residential properties set out in generous plots. Although properties vary in terms of their style, the regular layout of the buildings provides a visual cohesiveness to the street scene.
5. My attention has been drawn to decisions relating to other planning appeals along Dowhills Road. In the appeal at 61 Dowhills Road, the Inspector noted that the immediate context of that site was 'characterised by similar properties which have a regular rhythm of separation and spaciousness between and about the dwellings'¹ – a similar context to that of the current appeal site. However, in the case relating to the erection of 2 dwellings at 52a Dowhills Road², where the Inspector notes there is a mix of styles, ages and design, the issue appears to relate to the design of the buildings rather than their spatial

¹ Appeal ref: APP/M4320/W/15/3018509

² Appeal ref: APP/M4320/W/19/3236816

arrangement. Moreover, that site appears to be in a woodland setting. Accordingly, the context of that case is not therefore directly comparable with that of the proposal before me.

6. 8 Dowhills Road makes a positive contribution to the area largely because of its size and attractive visual appearance and also because of its plot size and, notwithstanding the presence of intervening outbuildings, the separation between the main part of the dwelling and its neighbour No 10.
7. The appeal proposal is for the subdivision of the appeal site and the construction of a two bedroomed detached dwelling in an area currently occupied by a single storey addition to the house, garage and car port, which would be demolished.
8. The proposed dwelling would be considerably less substantial in terms of its size and massing than the existing property and those in the immediate vicinity. Consequently, it would appear out of scale with, and would not reflect the character of, those properties. Moreover, it would be sited in very close proximity to the side wall of No 8. As such the limited space between the appeal proposal and the existing dwelling of 8 Dowhills Road would not reflect the characteristic gaps between the adjacent dwellings.
9. Furthermore, the proposal would considerably reduce the plot size for 8 Dowhills Road as such diminishing its currently positive effect on the character and appearance of the area. The resultant limited plot size for both the existing and proposed dwellings would result in the site as a whole having a cramped and overdeveloped appearance. Accordingly, the development would thereby be a discordant feature in the street scene and would detract from the spacious character and rhythm of the area.
10. I acknowledge that the existing structures are single storey and are well established in the area as incidental buildings. However, they are ancillary to the existing dwelling house and as such are both functionally and physically related to 8 Dowhills Road. In contrast, the appeal proposal would have a different function and would be physically unrelated to No 8. Accordingly, the visual effect of the outbuildings is incomparable to that of the proposed separate dwelling.
11. Policy HC3 of 'A Local Plan for Sefton' (April 2017) seeks to ensure that sites are developed efficiently to maximise the use of space. It requires that new residential development must achieve a minimum density of 30 dwellings per hectare of the net developable area. I acknowledge that the development may achieve this density. However, that does not indicate that permission should be granted and I note that a lower density can be justified having regard to the character and appearance of the site.
12. For the above reasons, the proposal would have an adverse impact on the character and appearance of the area. As such it is contrary to Policy EQ2 of 'A Local Plan for Sefton' which seeks to ensure, amongst other things, that development makes a positive contribution to its surroundings, having regard to local character, distinctiveness and form of its surroundings. For the same reasons, the proposal would also conflict with the policies in the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) that require development to add to the overall quality of the area and sense of place.

Other Matters

13. The proposal would be visible from the gardens of the neighbouring property 3 Elton Avenue, which I saw from the site visit. However, given the distance from the site boundary, the limited scale of the property and lack of facing habitable room windows, I am unconvinced, on the basis of the evidence before me, that it would cause unacceptable harm to the living conditions of the occupiers of that property.
14. I also acknowledge the concern regarding the proposed use of an existing vehicular access on Elton Avenue for the occupiers of 8 Dowhills Road insofar as it would be insufficient to provide adequate parking and turning space for a dwelling of that size. However, even if the driveway proved insufficient as a parking area, there is no convincing evidence before me that the any on-street parking would be detrimental to highway safety.
15. I acknowledge that the proposal would allow the appellant to downsize. This is a private benefit of the scheme. In addition, the proposal would release a family dwelling onto the market adding to housing choice. However, these benefits are limited in scale and as such carry limited weight in support of the proposal. Given that the development would not respect the character and appearance of the area for the above reasons, it would not constitute the sustainable development which the government seeks to promote. Consequently, these benefits would not outweigh the harm I have identified.

Conclusion and Recommendation

16. For the reasons given above and having regard to all other matters raised, including letters of support for the proposal, I recommend that the appeal is dismissed.

Hilary Senior

APPEAL PLANNING OFFICER

Inspector's Decision

17. I have considered all the submitted evidence and the Appeal Planning Officer's report and on that basis the appeal is dismissed.

Susan Ashworth

INSPECTOR