



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 24 November 2020

by K Savage BA MPlan MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 05 January 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/G2435/W/20/3258760

18 Meadow Lane, Coalville, Leicestershire LE67 4DL

- 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 Chris Kilby against the decision of North West Leicestershire District Council.
 - The application Ref 20/00086/FUL, dated 14 January 2020, was refused by notice dated 6 March 2020.
 - The development proposed is a pair of semi-detached, 2 bedroom retirement bungalows with off-street parking and amenity space.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

3. The appeal site is located to the rear of 18 Meadow Lane and alongside Greenfields Drive, from where it would be accessed. The site comprises an area of overgrown grass which appears to have formerly been part of the garden of No 18, but is now fenced off from it.
4. Two semi-detached, single storey dwellings are proposed, arranged centrally on the site with forecourt parking in front for four vehicles and narrow strips of outdoor amenity space to each side. Modest hedging is proposed to the front corners, with 1.8 metre close boarded fencing to the sides and an existing hedge to the rear boundary. The dwellings would have a simple pitched roof in brown tiles with a small porch canopy over the entrance door, walls in red brick with a blue brick splash course and uPVC windows.
5. Both Meadow Lane and Greenfields Drive are characterised by two storey, semi-detached dwellings with hipped roofs. Most are in red brick, though some yellow brick and rendered facades exist. No 18 is detached, though it reflects the scale and form of its immediate neighbours. 1A and 1B Greenfields Drive are a pair of newer two storey dwellings directly opposite the appeal site. Overall, the surrounding area is consistent in scale and appearance, particularly in Greenfields Drive, exhibiting a typical suburban character with dwellings set back into fairly generous plots with off-street parking to the front.
6. The single storey scale and squat form of the dwellings would appear diminutive and uncharacteristic amid these consistent surroundings. The small

size of the site is an obvious constraint to development, which would manifest in the dwellings standing close to the rear boundary and only a narrow strip of garden being provided to the side of each dwelling. Moreover, the frontage would be dominated by four parking spaces set tightly between the back edge of the footpath and the front elevations, allowing only a narrow access route between parked cars to the front doors. The result would be a cramped design which would fail to reflect the more spacious layout of surrounding plots.

7. The proposal would not achieve the 50/50 balance between parking areas and soft landscaping at the front of properties, as set out in the Council's Good Design Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) (April 2017), although I saw this to be the case for most of the properties in Greenfields Drive, including the newer dwellings at Nos 1A and 1B. Notwithstanding this, other dwellings enjoy more space to the front and parking did not appear as cramped as would be the case for the proposed dwellings.
8. The proposed garden areas would fall only marginally short of the SPD requirement that they at least equal the footprint of the property. However, their narrow shape and location to the sides of the dwellings is uncharacteristic of their surroundings and would add to the overall impression of dwellings being squeezed onto the site in a contrived and incongruous manner.
9. In terms of appearance, the use of red brick would reflect surrounding development, and pitched roofs with side gables are visible on Nos 1A and 1B opposite. The Council criticises the buildings for lacking design and architectural detailing, citing Section 12 of the SPD which states that buildings must be functional, attractive and long lasting. I have no evidence to suggest the dwellings would not be functional or not built to last. The buildings are simple in design but other dwellings in Greenfields Drive are relatively plain in form, and this in itself is not a drawback of the proposal, but it would not mitigate for the identified deficiencies in the layout.
10. I note that outline planning permission has been granted on the site for a single dwelling¹. This included approval of the layout, with the approved plans showing the dwelling positioned to the right hand side of the site looking from the street. This is an obvious difference from the present scheme, as it provides a single, larger garden area to the opposite side, and as a single dwelling it has a lower requirement for off-street parking spaces. As such, the approved scheme would appear less cramped on the site, and therefore this fall-back position would not be more harmful than the proposal now before me.
11. An appeal was also dismissed in 2014² for a scheme of two detached dwellings. These were two storey dwellings, described as being set close to the back edge of the footpath. Whilst not identical to this scheme, my own conclusions on the appeal scheme are similar to my colleague Inspector, who found the buildings would be out of kilter with the local street pattern, would relate poorly to other nearby buildings and would detract from the feeling of spacious openness.
12. The appellant draws my attention to three nearby developments at Linford Crescent and Vernon Crescent where former garages were replaced by two pairs of single storey semi-detached dwellings and one pair of two storey semi-detached dwelling. I viewed these developments and saw that the single storey

¹ Council Ref: 19/00921/OUT

² Appeal Ref APP/G2435/A/14/2223253

dwelling was located adjacent to other single storey dwellings of similar scale and layout, and the two storey pair was between other two storey dwellings. Therefore, whilst I accept the form of these dwellings is not dissimilar to the appeal scheme, the site context is different and, therefore, I do not regard these examples as comparable or determinative of the appeal before me, which I have considered on its own merits.

13. For the reasons set out, therefore, I conclude that the proposal would cause significant harm to the character and appearance of the area, in conflict with Policy D1 of the North West Leicestershire Local Plan (November 2017) which supports developments that offer good standard of design, informed by a comprehensive site and contextual appraisal. There would also be conflict with the aim of the National Planning Policy Framework to achieve high quality buildings and places through good design.

Other Matters

14. The Council did not find harm in respect of the effect on neighbours' living conditions, flood risk, trees, ecology, highway safety or parking. I note that the four parking spaces proposed meet the minimum quantum for two dwellings of three or fewer bedrooms. Based on all I have seen and read, I have no reasons to conclude differently to the Council in these other matters.
15. Two additional dwellings would add to the Council's housing stock and mix and would be in an accessible location for local services and facilities. This would be a social benefit, but a limited one given the small scale of the proposal.
16. The proposals are put forward as retirement dwellings for older occupants. I acknowledge the proposed single storey layout could facilitate this, including accommodation for a carer if necessary. However, there is nothing within the appellant's submissions which indicate that the dwellings would be permanently retained for occupation only by older residents. In the absence of a mechanism to secure this, the dwellings would be capable of general occupation. As such, I regard the social benefits of a layout conducive to occupation by older persons to attract only very limited weight in favour of the proposal.
17. There would be some economic benefits arising from the construction of the dwelling, though these would be temporary, and subsequently from spending by future residents in the local economy. Given the scale of the development, such benefits would not be significant, and I afford them limited weight.

Planning Balance and Conclusion

18. There would be significant harm arising from the adverse effect on the character and appearance of the area, resulting in conflict with the development plan, taken as a whole, to which I afford significant weight. The other material considerations in this case, taken together, would not outweigh the conflict with the development plan.
19. For the reasons given, therefore, the appeal is dismissed.

K. Savage

INSPECTOR