

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 24 November 2020

by Mr C J Tivey BSc (Hons) BPI MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 11 January 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/Z5060/W/20/3251799

88 Laurel Crescent, Rush Green, Romford RM7 0RT

- 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 Shpend Kuka against the decision of the London Borough of Barking & Dagenham Council.
 - The application Ref 20/00069/FUL, dated 22 January 2020, was refused by notice dated 13 March 2020.
 - The development proposed is for the erection of two new 2x2 bed houses on land adjacent to 88 Laurel Crescent, Dagenham RM7 0RT.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issues are the effect of the appeal proposal on:
 1. The character and appearance of the area;
 2. The living conditions of the future occupants of the proposed development, with specific reference to private amenity space; and
 3. Whether the proposal would be sustainable in terms of its accessibility, with specific reference to off-street parking provision.

Reasons

Character and Appearance

3. The site is located within a residential street mainly comprising semi-detached and terraced houses, many of which have been altered and extended over the years. Notwithstanding this, the placement of gable projections on the principal elevations tend to be symmetrical: on terraces they are generally located upon the end units; and on semi-detached houses they are sited closer together, either side of their respective party walls.
4. The proposal would introduce two narrower gable features which are not so apparent within the street scene and in totality the extension of built form to the host dwelling would appear as an overly dominant addition to the existing semi-detached pair, rather than as a complete terrace.

5. Whilst I accept that there are a variety of roof designs within the locality, and that the proposal would represent a more efficient re-use of the site I am not convinced by the design solution before me. Further, due to its current boundary treatment I consider that the site is visually self-contained and therefore currently has little impact upon the character and appearance of the area. I note that the location within which the appeal site is situated is not covered by any landscape of heritage designations, nonetheless the National Planning Policy Framework (the 'Framework') encourages a high quality standard of design. I acknowledge that the design approach adopted seeks to pick up on some of the architectural detailing found in the area, but the width of the two gable features would be unduly narrow and I consider that the proposed development, by virtue of its design would fail to sympathetically follow the design rhythm of existing developments within Laurel Crescent.
6. Therefore as it stands, I consider that the proposal would harm the character and appearance of the area, in conflict not only with the Framework, but with policy CP3 of the Council's Core Strategy (2010) and policy BP11 of the Borough Wide Development Policies Development Plan Document (2011) (DPD) which together expect all development proposals to achieve high quality standards in relation to the design of new buildings through the provision of attractive high quality architecture, whilst protecting or enhancing the character and amenity of the area.

Living Conditions

7. DPD policy BP5 states that the Council will only grant planning permission for new dwellings where they provide appropriate external private amenity space to meet the needs generated by the development. This amenity space would normally be expected to meet minimum standards which in the case of a 2no bedroom house equates to 50sqm.
8. The middle unit would have a private rear garden of 37.64sqm and whilst I acknowledge that the DPD was adopted prior to the publication of the Framework, nevertheless this is a fairly common standard found throughout England. It has not been demonstrated how this policy conflicts with National policy, but I note that the Department for Transport's Manual for Streets and the Chartered Institution of Highways and Transportation's (CIHT) guidelines for providing for journeys on foot are older still, having been published in 2007 and 2000 respectively.
9. Notwithstanding this, the CIHT guidelines refer to the distances that people would comfortably walk to a range of community services and facilities. I note that Eastbrookend Country Park is located within an 8 minute walk of the appeal site, whilst Grenfell Park is approximately a 10 minute walk away. The Council does not dispute these timings. However these areas of public open space are not right on the doorstep of the appeal site and as the proposed central dwelling could provide modest family accommodation, there is no reason why there should be a substandard provision of private amenity space within this proposal, particularly bearing in mind the oversized nature of the garden adjoining. Whilst it might be the case that many people have no interest in large gardens due to maintenance, nonetheless I consider that a garden of 50sqm would be one that is easily manageable, notwithstanding the quality of the internal living environment of the proposed dwellings.

10. Therefore I can only conclude on this matter that the proposed development would fail to provide adequate external amenity space which would be detrimental to the quality of life of future occupiers of the central unit, contrary to DPD policy BP5 as summarised above.

Parking Provision

11. The Council states that the application site has a Public Transport Accessibility Level (PTAL) rating of 1a which represents a low level of accessibility to public transport links. I note that the maximum parking standards as set out within the London Plan (2016) state that for dwellings of 1-2 bedrooms less than 1 space per unit should be provided; within the notes it states that all developments in areas of good public transport accessibility should aim for significantly less than 1 space per unit. However due to the low level of accessibility to public transport links I consider that it would not be unreasonable to provide 1 space per dwelling and therefore I find that notwithstanding the provision of on-street parking within the crescent, that the proposed number of car parking spaces would be acceptable.
12. However whilst I find in favour of the appellant in respect of this issue, and I agree that the proposal would make a modest contribution towards local housing supply, in a location where the principle of residential development is deemed to be acceptable, nonetheless these matters do not outweigh the harm that would be caused to character and appearance of the area; and the future living conditions of the central unit.

Conclusion and Conditions

13. Having regard to the above and all other matters raised, I conclude that the appeal be dismissed.

C J Tivey

INSPECTOR