
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 4 December 2020

by J D Westbrook BSc(Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 12 January 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/R3515/W/20/3254340

Land Rear of 133 - 139 Valley Road, IPSWICH, IP1 4PQ

- 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 Pajoma Ltd against the decision of Ipswich Borough Council.
 - The application Ref IP/20/00311/FUL, dated 8 April 2020, was refused by notice dated 4 June 2020.
 - The development proposed is described as the erection of a pair of semi-detached dwellings.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matter

2. The full description of the proposed development indicates that the pair of semi-detached houses would be in lieu of part of the site approved for a total of 7 dwellings under a previous application ref: IP/19/00325/FUL. It would appear that the pair of semi-detached dwellings would effectively replace a single detached house on the same plot, such that there would be 8 dwellings on the whole of that site which currently benefits from a planning permission for 7 dwellings.

Main Issues

3. The main issues in this case are the effect of the proposed development on:
 - The character and appearance of the area around Valley Road and Valley Close, and
 - The housing supply in Ipswich Borough.

Reasons

4. The appeal site is part of an area of backland to the rear of Nos 133-139 Valley Road, and to the rear of Nos 2A -10 Valley Close. It is an L-shaped area of land, with a large school playing field to the north. The proposed semi-detached dwellings would be sited in the south-west corner of the backland plot, at a point where the service road turns from an east-west alignment to north-south. The service road will, when developed, continue round past the appeal site to culminate in turning areas for the dwellings at the northern end of the overall plot. At the time of my visit, it appeared that no development had started with regard to the earlier permission.

Character and appearance

5. The appeal site lies within the Parks Character Area (PCA), an Ipswich Urban Characterisation Study. The Valley Road area has been identified as a sub-area within the PCA. The Study makes a number of relevant observations about the sub-area. These include the following: "The low density, garden suburb character of the area should be protected and reflected in the design of modern development", and "The typical frontage treatment in the area is a generous front garden; this should be the case with modern development unless there is a good design reason"
6. Policy DM5 of the Ipswich Core Strategy and Policies DPD Review (DPD) indicates that development should protect and enhance the special character and distinctiveness of the Borough, helping to reinforce the attractive physical characteristics of local neighbourhoods and the visual appearance of the immediate street scene. Furthermore, developments should exhibit good architectural quality. Policy DM13 of the DPD, which relates to small-scale backland residential developments, requires developments to protect the character and appearance of the area, and to protect the amenity of neighbouring residents, particularly in terms of overbearing impact.
7. In this case, the area around the appeal site and the larger plot is characterised by detached houses on large plots. They have, in the main, substantial front gardens and long rear gardens, such that the area is one of spaciousness and low density. It would appear that the plot to the rear of Nos 133 – 139 Valley Road has been created, at least in part, by the separation of some of the rear gardens of those properties into a development site to the rear. Nevertheless, these dwellings retain a substantial front garden and moderate-sized rear garden, whilst all other properties in the vicinity maintain the open and spacious nature of the Valley Road sub-area.
8. The existing permission on the larger plot relates to 7 detached houses, each on moderate sized plots. The current proposal would entail the development of a pair of semi-detached houses on the site previously allocated to a single detached house. This would result in a very cramped development on the appeal site, with two small houses in small plots. This would be significantly out of character with the tone of the surrounding area on both Valley Road and Valley Close. The two semi-detached houses would have much smaller front gardens than the remaining detached houses on the overall plot, which are already relatively small within the context of the area. Furthermore, it would appear that an additional car parking space would be needed to serve these houses and this would add to the cramped nature of the appeal site.
9. No 2A Valley Close is a detached bungalow and the currently permitted detached house on the appeal site would be in close proximity to the rear boundary of the bungalow. However, that house would have a pitched roof sloping away from the bungalow. The proposed houses would be of a similar height to the permitted house, but would have full height gable ends that would appear more prominent and overbearing when viewed from the bungalow. This is a relatively minor issue, but it adds to my concerns that the proposal would have the appearance of over-development of the appeal site.
10. The appellants contend that the proposed development would not have the appearance of a traditional pair of semi-detached properties, by virtue of setting only one front door access in the front elevation, with the other in the

side elevation. It is claimed that this would result in the building having the appearance of a single dwelling. However, I consider this to be a contrived approach to the design of the houses, that does not represent high quality. Moreover, the appellants note that the PCA considers the Valley Road sub-area to be less architecturally mixed than the rest of the character area, with some examples of Arts and Crafts and Art Deco architecture, and one excellent example of Modernism. However, the proposed semi-detached houses are not examples of Arts and Crafts or Art Deco architecture, but are, instead, somewhat unexceptional, with an unsatisfactory front door arrangement.

11. In conclusion, I find that the proposed houses would be significantly harmful to the character and appearance of the larger development site and the wider Valley Road/Valley Close area. It would conflict with policies DM5 and DM13 of the DPD, and with the characterisation of the area in the PCA.

Housing Supply

12. It is agreed that the Borough cannot demonstrate a 5-year supply of housing. On this basis, footnote 7 to paragraph 11 of the National Planning Policy Framework (The Framework) indicates that local planning authorities should grant permission for housing proposals 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. In this case, the social and economic benefits of constructing one extra unit on the appeal site would be minimal, whereas the adverse impacts of both the cramped appearance and the somewhat contrived design of the semi-detached houses on the surrounding environment would be significant. Moreover, the addition of one extra unit of housing would have very limited benefit to the overall housing supply in the Borough.
14. The appellants also contend that the market for 3 bedroomed houses is high in the Borough and that the introduction of two such dwellings to replace a single 5-bedroomed property would be a benefit. However, there is still a significant demand for larger houses, and I do not consider that the introduction of two cramped semi-detached houses in this particular location would necessarily be appropriate or desirable, given the context of the surroundings.
15. In conclusion on this issue, I find that the significant adverse impacts of the proposed development by way of harm to the character and appearance of the area, would clearly outweigh the very limited social and economic benefits and the provision of one extra unit of accommodation.

Conclusion

16. I find that the proposed development would be significantly harmful to the character and appearance of the area around Valley Road and Valley Close, and the application of the balancing exercise, as required by The Framework, would show this adverse impact as clearly outweighing any benefits of the scheme.

J D Westbrook

INSPECTOR