



Appeal Decision

Site Visit made on 17 May 2021

by F Rafiq BSc (Hons), MCD, MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 8th June 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/A0665/W/21/3269265

46 Oakfield Road, Blacon, Chester CH1 5AQ

- 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 Randev against the decision of Cheshire West and Chester Council.
 - The application Ref 19/01859/FUL, dated 8 May 2019, was refused by notice dated 20 January 2021.
 - The development proposed is described as 'erection of 3no dwelling houses following demolition of existing bungalow'.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. I have used the correct postcode referenced on the decision notice and appeal form rather than the application form. Although the application form states the development is for 3 no dwelling houses the scheme was revised during the application stage and the proposal now involves the erection of two new dwellings. I have considered this appeal accordingly.

Main Issue

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

Reasons

4. The appeal property comprises of a detached bungalow on the northern side of Oakfield Road. A variety of bungalows and two storey properties of differing designs and styles can be seen on this side of the road, some of which have been subject to alterations and extensions. Despite the diverse appearance of buildings, as well as variations in plot widths, properties are generally set back from the road behind front parking and garden areas which provide for a spacious pattern of development. This built form, as well as the presence of vegetation and trees in garden areas contribute to the pleasant, verdant and open character and appearance of the area.
5. The development would introduce a pair of two storey detached houses close to the side boundaries of the site, with limited spacing between the pair of detached houses. Although one of the proposed houses would be inset further from No 44 Oakfield Road than the existing bungalow it would replace, it would be a taller two storey structure.

6. I accept that the spacing between buildings in the area varies, and that properties are less ordered to the north of road as opposed to those that are more evenly spaced to the south. I was also able to see the building at No 52 Oakfield Road, which almost fills the entire width of the plot. Nevertheless, despite this variance, the presence of spacing between buildings is part of the prevailing pattern of development that contributes to the special character of the area. From my site observations, the open character includes views over single storey elements, some of which are to the side of two storey buildings, towards rear garden areas that contain vegetation and trees. The proposal, in reducing such views, would result in a cramped and discordant form of development that would harm the spacious and verdant character of the area.
7. I note the reference made to densities and that the proposed plot sizes are larger or broadly equivalent to the plot sizes that make up the prevailing density in the area. The two storey form of the proposal with accommodation in the roofspace would also be comparable to other dwellings. The depth of the proposed houses overall, considering the single storey elements to the rear, would also not be out of character having regard to their siting and surrounding properties. Furthermore, the dwellings would use traditional materials with some contemporary detailing that would not appear out of context in this location. Concern was raised on the car parking at the front, but I do not consider this would be unduly dominant as the hardstanding areas would be separated by soft landscaped garden areas. However, none of these considerations would overcome the harm that I have identified.
8. I therefore conclude that the proposed development would have an unacceptable detrimental impact on the character and appearance of the area. It would be contrary to Policy ENV 6 of the Cheshire West and Chester Council Local Plan (Part One) Strategic Policies and Policies DM 3 and DM 19 of the Cheshire West and Chester Council Local Plan (Part Two) Land Allocations and Detailed Policies. These seek, amongst other matters, high quality design that respects local character. It would also be contrary to Paragraph 127 of the National Planning Policy Framework (Framework), which seeks, amongst other matters, development that is sympathetic to the local character.
9. At my site visit I noted that the existing bungalow is vacant and its physical condition is deteriorating. I also acknowledge that the proposal would provide an additional dwelling by making efficient use of a site in an accessible location within the settlement boundary and the various references of support from local and national policy in this regard. Further, the proposed development would, by providing detached houses in an area that has a large proportion of semi-detached dwellings, widen the mix of housing in the area. A condition could also be used to ensure the sustainable construction of the dwellings subject of this appeal. Whilst these matters weigh in favour of the proposal, my findings suggest that the proposal's impacts would outweigh the merits and it would not be the form of sustainable development that the Framework has set out a presumption in favour of.
10. The appellant has set out that further information was provided to the Council and that amendments were made to the scheme to overcome concerns. The adequacy of parking and amenity space provision and that there would be no adverse impact on residential amenity or issues regarding protected species have been set out. These are however neutral matters and do not weigh in favour of the development.

Conclusion

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

F Rafiq

INSPECTOR