



Appeal Decision

Site Visit made on 15 November 2021

by James Blackwell LLB (Hons) PgDip

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 24 November 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/K0425/W/21/3281698

Land to rear of 10 and 11 Albion Road, High Wycombe HP12 3LU

- 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 Richard Potyka of RAP Bluebell Ltd against the decision of Buckinghamshire Council.
 - The application Ref 20/08509/FUL, dated 20 December 2020, was refused by notice dated 11 August 2021.
 - The development proposed is the erection of a pair of three-bedroom semi-detached dwellings with access, parking and amenity space.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

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

Reasons

3. Nos. 10 and 11 Albion Road are a pair of semi-detached dwellings, situated in a predominantly residential area of High Wycombe. The appeal site comprises part of their rear gardens. The gardens to these properties are substantial, and are commensurate in size and length with those of other houses on the southern side of Albion Road. The large linear gardens give the area a strong sense of openness, which contributes positively to the character of the area. This openness is particularly acute and apparent along Birinus Close, which is a cul-de-sac running south from Albion Road.
4. The proposed development would introduce a pair of three-bedroom semi-detached dwellings within the appeal site, with their frontages facing out on to Birinus Close. The development would also include 2 car parking spaces to serve each dwelling to the northern side of the new properties. Whilst nos. 10 and 11 would retain adequate levels of private amenity space in themselves, the footprint of the development would nonetheless be substantial. It would occupy approximately half of the garden to no. 11, and close to two thirds of the garden to no. 10. As a result, the gardens to these properties would become fragmented, and would appear substantially smaller than the neighbouring gardens along the southern side for Albion Road. Not only would this interrupt the strong linear formation of the gardens to the rear of these properties, but it would seriously compromise the strong degree of openness which is so readily experienced to the rear of these properties along Birinus Close.

5. The frontage of the new dwellings would face out on to Birinus Close. They would sit slightly taller than the adjacent neighbouring properties, incorporating a third storey into their roof space. This additional height would jar with the prevailing character of the properties along this road, which is typified by pairs of two-storey properties comprised of separate flats. As a result, the dwellings would fail to assimilate properly with the street scene. This impact would be further exacerbated by the front facing dormer windows, as their pointed roofs would draw additional focus to the height of the new dwellings, thereby exaggerating the mismatch with their neighbours.
6. Along Albion Road, off-street parking is generally provided to the front of each dwelling within linear driveways. Along Birinus Close, parking spaces are grouped together in larger areas to serve the flats which make up the road. Conversely, the off-street parking to serve both new dwellings would all be provided to the side of the northernmost property. This arrangement would be at odds with the parking layout along both roads, and would therefore appear discordant and incongruous within the street scene. More generally, it also highlights the constraints of the appeal site in terms of accommodating a pair of new dwellings.
7. For these reasons, the proposed development would harm the character and appearance of the area. It would conflict with Policy DM35 of the Wycombe District Local Plan (adopted 2019) and guidance in the Council's Housing Intensification Supplementary Planning Document (2011), which both seek to ensure new development improves the character of an area, through design and layout which responds properly to the scale and form of buildings and the spaces around them.

Other Matters

8. Whilst all development proposals must be assessed on their own merits, there is a risk that approval of the proposal development could be used to justify similar "backland" development. Nonetheless, given the unique siting of the appeal site which could achieve its own active frontage on to Birinus Close, this factor would not justify a refusal in this instance.
9. Moreover, whilst I acknowledge the proposed new frontage on to Birinus Close would offer a benefit in terms of improved surveillance along this stretch of the road, this would not outweigh the harm to the overriding character and appearance of the area as identified above.

Conclusion

10. The proposal would conflict with the development plan as a whole and there are no other considerations, including the provisions of the Framework, which outweigh this finding. Therefore, for the reasons given, the appeal should be dismissed.

James Blackwell

INSPECTOR