



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 21 February 2023

by K Allen MEng (Hons) MArch PGCert ARB

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 29th March 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/Q1825/W/22/3290521

Land off Holmwood Drive, Redditch B97 4RQ

- 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 D Ellis and M Davis against the decision of Redditch Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 20/01448/FUL, dated 17 November 2020, was refused by notice dated 11 October 2021.
 - The development proposed is described as 'construction of a detached dwelling, creation of access and associated works'.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are the effect of the proposal on:
 - the character and appearance of the area; and
 - the living conditions of the occupiers of No 4 Needle Court, with particular regard to dominance and light.

Reasons

Character and appearance

3. The appeal site is located between two distinct areas. Holmwood Drive and Vicarage Crescent, comprises several different house types from the 20th Century following a regular layout and spacing. Needle Court is characterised by closely spaced, former industrial buildings which are in residential and commercial uses. A well-used public footpath runs between the appeal site and Holmwood Drive, lined by a mature hedge row and several trees, clearly defining the boundary of the estate. The footpath is separated from the highway with limited views towards the surrounding dwellings from it, providing a protected gateway to the adjacent woodland area. Despite its urban location the footpath has a distinctly rural quality.
4. The appeal site comprises an enclosed area of grassland, formerly a private garden, with several low-level garden structures. Due to the topography, the appeal site sits in a prominent and elevated position. While existing fencing visually separates the site, the uninterrupted views of sky and mature planting affords Holmwood Drive a pleasant verdant character and a sense of openness.

5. Although there is variation in the pattern of development surrounding the site, the proposal would relate visually to Holmwood Drive, it would be the only dwelling on the northern side of the highway and despite the use of similar materials, it would appear isolated in relation to the existing dwellings.
6. While the footpath would benefit from increased surveillance, the partial removal of the hedgerow and fencing would reduce the existing separation between the footpath and the adjacent dwellings, further, the large roof would appear dominant, bulky, and distinctly urban when viewed from the footpath, diminishing its rural quality.
7. I accept that there are views of the properties which front Bromsgrove Road from Holmwood Drive, however due to the topography, only rooftops are visible, and these appear low in the sky. Although the majority of the site would remain open with existing planting being retained, because of its height and position, adjacent the junction of Holmwood Drive and Vicarage Crescent, the proposal would be extremely prominent when approaching via Vicarage Crescent. It would sit significantly higher in the sky and would detract from the existing openness and verdant character of Holmwood Drive.
8. Considering Policy 5, paragraph 5.4 of the Borough of Redditch Local Plan No.4 (January 2017) (RLP), the proposal would provide an additional dwelling in an accessible location. However, for the reasons given above, it would not integrate fully into the neighbourhood and would have a negative effect on the character of Holmwood Drive. Notwithstanding the effective and efficient use of land, the environmental, social, and economic benefits of a single dwelling built on private garden land would not outweigh the harm identified above.
9. Overall, I conclude that the proposal would harm the character and appearance of the area, in conflict with Policies 5, 39 and 40 of the RLP which seek to ensure that development contributes positively to the local area and integrates fully into the neighbourhood through appropriate siting and layout. The proposal would also conflict with the Borough of Redditch High Quality Design SPD (June 2019) (SPD) which seeks to ensure development fits suitably into the street scene. Similarly, it would be contrary to the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) which requires development to be sympathetic to local character and maintain a strong sense of place.

Living conditions

10. Despite being positioned towards the south on higher ground and at an oblique angle to No 4, the proposal would sit behind No 4's rear building line. The roof would slope away from the shared boundary, with the main bulk of the roof set alongside the blank gable wall. Due to its position, its sloping roof and the height of the existing intervening fencing the proposal would not appear overbearing nor would there be a harmful loss of sunlight or overshadowing to the garden of No 4, even taking into account its narrow proportions.
11. Therefore, the proposal would not harm the living conditions of the residents of No 4, with particular regard to dominance and light. It would comply with Policies 39 and 40 of the RLP which together require development to contribute to making places better for people to live. The proposal would also comply with the SPD where it seeks to ensure that development does not result in overbearance or overshadowing of existing properties. Similarly, it would

accord with the Framework which seeks to ensure a high standard of amenity is provided for existing and future residents.

Other Matters

12. The Council was unable to demonstrate a 5 year housing land supply at the time of the application. However, the Council indicate that an 8.9 year supply can now be demonstrated. The appellant has made no comments on this matter. Nevertheless, based on the evidence before me, I am satisfied that paragraph 11 of the Framework is not engaged.
13. The Appellant disputes the status of Needle Court and 95a Bromsgrove Road as non-designated heritage assets. However, their significance is derived from their link to the needle industry and economic growth of the area as well as their industrial character with simple form and repetitive façades. They are associated with the area's industrial heritage and as such I consider them to be non-designated heritage assets in the terms set out in the Framework. Nevertheless, I am satisfied that the proposal would not result in any loss of significance or harm to the properties as non-designated heritage assets because of the proximity of the appeal proposal to them.

Conclusion

14. I am satisfied that the proposal would not detract from the living conditions of No 4 Needle Court, however, for the reasons given above, I conclude that the proposal would be harmful to the character and appearance of the area. The proposal would conflict with the development plan as a whole and there are no material considerations, including the Framework that would outweigh that conflict. Therefore, the appeal is dismissed.

K Allen

INSPECTOR