

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 1 December 2023

by N McGurk BSc (Hons) MCD MBA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 13 December 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/Q4625/D/23/3332429

43 Blandford Avenue, Castle Bromwich, Solihull, B36 9HY

- 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 Mrs Rukhsana Parveen against the decision of Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council.
 - The application Ref PL/2023/01698/MINFHO, dated 9 August 2023, was refused by notice dated 26 September 2023.
 - The development proposed is erection of single storey side and rear extensions, two storey side and rear extensions and alterations to forward gable roof feature and roof lights to the front. Flat roof canopy to porch area. Widening existing drop kerb to driveway and permeable block paving, erection of low-level boundary wall to front, erection of boundary wall and fencing to side.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

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

Procedural Matter

3. The appellant draws my attention to what is described as a "campaign against the development." However, there is no evidence before me of any impropriety and whilst the proposal the subject of this appeal attracted a large number of objections, I note that consultation purposefully provides for people to engage with the planning process.
4. The appellant states that the Council has acted inconsistently and has not sufficiently assessed or considered the proposal the subject of this appeal. Whilst this is a matter between the appellant and the Council, I note that the Council's officer's report sets out a clear and succinct assessment and that the Council's planning decision was based on identified conflict with the adopted policies of the development plan.

Reasons

5. The appeal property is a two-storey semi-detached dwelling situated in a prominent corner location along Blandford Avenue at its junction with Neville
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Road. The dwelling has a projecting porch to the front, an attached garage to the side and a single storey extension to the rear.

6. The surrounding area is characterised by the presence of similar two storey detached and semi-detached dwellings set back from the road behind parking areas and/or small front garden areas. Dwellings have larger gardens to the rear and glimpses through to these, together with the set-back from the road and gaps between dwellings and pairs of dwellings, provide for a sense of spaciousness.
7. Further to the above, the presence of similar hip roofs, front gables, bays and brick and tile materials provides for a satisfying sense of rhythm and uniformity in the area surrounding the appeal site. Further, whilst I noted during my site visit that pairs of semi-detached houses in the area tend to differ slightly from one another, due to extensions and alterations, such differences tend to be subtle. As a consequence of this, pairs of dwellings retain a strong sense of symmetry, to the benefit of the area's uniform qualities.
8. During my site visit, I observed that the appeal property and the property on the opposite side of Neville Road, Number 45 Blandford Avenue, are both located on relatively generous plots, with garden land to the side. Consequently, Nos 43 and 45 together provide for a spacious gateway into Neville Road from Blandford Avenue. They also provide for a considerable sense of space and greenery as one heads towards Blandford Avenue from Neville Road itself. In this regard, the appeal site makes a significant positive contribution to local character.
9. The proposal would extend the existing dwelling across much of the width of its plot and in more than doubling the overall width of the host dwelling, I find that it would largely eliminate the green and spacious attributes of this side of the entrance to Neville Road. This would also lead the proposed development to appear to jar awkwardly with the more open and spacious characteristics of No 45 opposite, to the detriment of the area's rhythmic qualities.
10. Further to the above, the proposal's overall scale, bulk and massing would result in it failing to appear as a subservient extension. Rather, I consider that the totality of the development proposed would combine to overwhelm and to some degree, subsume the appearance of the host property. Furthermore, it would result in a dwelling that would appear unlike any other house in the area, to the detriment of the area's uniform qualities.
11. The harm arising from the proposal's incongruous appearance would be exacerbated as a result of the dwelling's prominent location, whereby the proposed development would appear visually dominant and would draw attention to itself as an alien feature, out of keeping with its surroundings.
12. I also find that additional harm would arise as a consequence of the proposed development leading the appeal property to appear entirely out of proportion with its adjoining neighbour. This would severely unbalance the sense of symmetry between these attached dwellings.
13. Taking all of the above into account, I find that the proposal would harm the character and appearance of the area. This would be contrary to the National Planning Policy Framework; to Policy P15 of the Solihull Local Plan (2013); and

to the Council's House Extensions Guidelines Supplementary Planning Document (2010), which together amongst other things, seek to protect local character.

Other Matters

14. The appellant, in support of the proposal, draws my attention to personal circumstances relating to the applicant. I acknowledge these and note that the proposed development could result in benefits in respect of meeting specific needs. However, whilst this is a factor that weighs in support of the proposal, it does not amount to something that outweighs the significant harm to local character identified above.
15. The appellant, in support of the proposal, draws attention to other developments in the surrounding area. However, there is no substantive evidence before me to demonstrate that each of these comprise developments with circumstances so similar to the proposal before me as to provide for direct comparison. Notwithstanding this and in any case, I have found that the proposal would result in significant harm to local character. This is not something that is mitigated by the presence of other developments elsewhere.

Conclusion

16. For the reasons given above, the appeal is unsuccessful.

N McGurk

INSPECTOR