



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 6 June 2024

by Lewis Condé BSc, MSc, MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 26 June 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/E0345/W/23/3334072

4 Alford Close, Tilehurst, Reading RG30 4TB

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mr Tim Ridley, Stafford Developments, against the decision of Reading Borough Council.
 - The application Ref is 230301.
 - The development proposed is the erection of a new end of terrace house and alterations and extensions to the existing house.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The description of development in the banner heading above has been taken directly from the original planning application form.
3. The Council's third reason for refusal relates to the lack of a legal agreement to secure a financial contribution towards the provision of affordable housing. I have been made aware that main parties are in the process of seeking to agree a draft Unilateral Undertaking (UU) to address this matter. However, at the time of writing an appropriately executed UU has not been received.

Main Issues

4. The main issues are:
 - i) the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area;
 - ii) the effect of the proposal on the living conditions of the neighbouring occupiers of nos. 5 and 6 Alford Close, with respect to outlook and loss of light; and
 - iii) the effect of the proposal on the living conditions of future occupiers of the proposed development with respect to the provision of private outdoor amenity space.

Reasons

Character and Appearance

5. No. 4 Alford Close (no. 4), is an end of terrace property set within a small row of dwellings that share a general uniformity in appearance despite some minor variations to their frontages. The appeal property is served by an existing front and side garden, which can be viewed from the public realm.

6. The surrounding area is also largely characterised by terraced dwellings with limited front gardens and relatively small separation distances between blocks, resulting in a relatively dense urban grain. Indeed, another small terrace of properties sits perpendicular to the appeal dwelling, separated primarily by the existing side garden to no. 4 and a rather narrow driveway.
7. Given the tight urban grain, the existing front/side garden to the appeal property, although in private ownership and of limited overall scale, provides an important element of space and visual relief between the blocks of terrace housing. The greenery within the side garden also helps to soften the surrounding predominant built form.
8. Due to the tapered nature of the appeal site's boundary the development would involve a two-storey frontage with a single storey element to the rear and in part to the side. The proposed new dwelling would be located tight to the boundary line and essentially would cover the full width of the plot's frontage. The position of the proposed development and its coverage of almost the full width of the plot, its mix of two-storey and single storey design to fit the constraints of the plot, together with the spacing with neighbouring properties, would result in the dwelling having a rather cramped appearance. The loss of the existing side garden to additional built form would also be to the detriment of the streetscene, which would not be overcome by the provision of additional landscaping to the rear of the property.
9. Furthermore, the proposed car-port serving the new dwelling would dominate its frontage and is not in keeping with the remainder of the terrace. As such, I find it would upset the general rhythm and continuity of the terrace of properties. I recognise that the carport design feature was introduced to satisfy the Council's adopted parking standards, nevertheless it would result in an unsatisfactory form of development.
10. The resultant harm arising from the design of the proposed development would be exacerbated due to the prominent corner position of the proposed new dwelling.
11. The appellant has indicated that an alternative front door arrangement could be pursued for the proposal, thus enabling the design to maintain a closer rhythm with adjacent properties. However, I must consider the appeal based on the scheme before me.
12. Similarly, I am not persuaded that the nature of alterations to no. 1 Alford Close (no.1) justify the appeal scheme. The works to no. 1 involved a two-storey side extension, as opposed to a new dwelling, and had a frontage design more in keeping with neighbouring properties. That property is also more discretely located within the streetscene. The appellant has also made reference to alterations to other dwellings nearby, however, no specific details have been provided, including the circumstances of those other developments. As such, my decision does not turn on this matter.
13. Overall, whilst reasonably localised in its extent, the effect of the scheme would be to unacceptably harm the character and appearance of the area. It therefore conflicts with policies CC7 and H11 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (adopted 2019) (the Local Plan). Together, the policies, amongst other matters, seek for new development to be of a high-quality design that responds positively to its surroundings.

Living Conditions of Neighbouring Occupiers

14. Nos. 5 and 6 Alford Close (no. 5 and no. 6) sit perpendicular to the appeal site, with the frontages of the neighbouring dwellings facing towards the side elevation and garden of no. 4.
15. The appeal scheme would result in a two-storey dwelling being sited tight to the boundary with the neighbouring residential properties. The two-storey flank wall of the proposed dwelling would sit approximately 12m from the front elevation of nos. 5 and 6. As such, the proposal would introduce a sizeable and largely blank elevation near the neighbouring properties. No. 5 is slightly off-set to the proposed new dwelling, such that it would largely look onto the garden space of the property. However, no. 6 would directly face towards the side elevation of the proposed dwelling.
16. From my observations on site, it appears likely that the upper floor windows of no. 6 serve habitable rooms, while from the evidence before me I cannot satisfactorily conclude otherwise. I find that the combined scale of the proposed dwelling, together with its close proximity and orientation to the neighbouring property's upper floor front windows (no. 6), would result in a harmful loss of outlook and visual overbearing impacts.
17. I am not convinced that there would be a significant loss of light to any neighbouring properties. Nor harm to the living conditions of the neighbouring occupiers at no.5, or along Tyle Road. However, this does not diminish the harm to no.6 in terms of loss of outlook.
18. Overall, I find the proposal would result in harm to the living conditions of the neighbouring occupiers of no.6 through a loss of outlook. The proposal therefore conflicts with Local Plan policies CC8 and H11. Together these policies, amongst other matters, seek for new development to avoid significant detrimental impacts to the amenity of nearby occupants, including avoiding visual dominance and overbearing impacts, as well as safeguarding outlook for existing residents.

Living Conditions of Future Occupiers

19. From my observations on site and the evidence before me, the existing appeal property and the proposed new dwelling would be served by garden spaces of a broadly comparable size to several neighbouring properties in the area. While my attention has not been drawn to the proposal breaching any specified space standards that the Council may have adopted in relation to the provision of external garden/amenity space.
20. The private garden spaces would be located immediately to the rear of the existing and proposed dwellings. Together the size and configuration of the gardens would ensure they would be practical and functional spaces for use by future occupiers of the proposed dwellings. Indeed, the spaces could comfortably accommodate a range of domestic activities alongside one another, for example, multiple residents simultaneously using the spaces for recreation, drying of clothes, children's play, outdoor dining etc.
21. Accordingly, I find that the proposed development would provide appropriate living conditions for future occupiers in respect of the provision of private outdoor amenity space. In respect of this main issue, the appeal scheme therefore complies with Local Plan policies CC8, H10 and H11. Amongst other

matters, these policies seek to ensure that development provides appropriate living standards for future occupiers and that dwellings are provided with functional private outdoor amenity space. Nevertheless, this does not overcome my above concerns with the proposed development.

Other Matters

22. As indicated the Council's third reason for refusal related to the lack of a financial contribution (approx. £17,500) towards the provision of off-site affordable housing. The appellant has not contested the need to provide this obligation, while I am aware that the main parties have been working on a legal agreement to address the matter. However, as indicated I am not in receipt of an appropriately executed UU. Given that I am in any case dismissing the appeal on other grounds, I have not further sought a completed version of the UU.
23. There would be socio-economic benefits associated with the delivery of the proposed development, including through the construction and subsequent occupation of the new dwelling. As well as potentially through the provision of a financial contribution towards affordable housing delivery had the UU been complete. Nevertheless, due to the scale of development such benefits would be limited and would not overcome the above identified harm to the character and appearance of the area or living conditions of neighbours.
24. Whilst the proposal may comply with other development plan policies, this is to be expected of new development proposals and therefore does not weigh in favour of the appeal scheme.
25. I note the appellant's frustration with the manner that the Council dealt with the application in light of received feedback during the application and pre-application stages. However, the appeal scheme has been determined on its own merits.

Conclusion

26. The proposal would conflict with the development plan as a whole and there are no other considerations that justify a decision other than in accordance with it. The appeal is therefore dismissed.

Lewis Condé

INSPECTOR