
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 5 December 2024

by L J O'Brien BA (Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 10 December 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/Q0505/W/24/3349975

82 Arbury Road, Cambridge, Cambridgeshire, CB4 2JE

- 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 Pradeep Sakthivel (Whitfield Portfolio Ltd) against the decision of Cambridge City Council.
 - The application Ref is 24/01367/FUL.
 - The development proposed at the rear of 82 Arbury Road comprises a Bungalow.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue in this appeal is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

3. The appeal site comprises an area of garden land to the rear of No. 82 Arbury Road which is currently in use as a guesthouse. The appeal site is situated between Arbury Road, a fairly wide residential road and Maio Road, a short residential cul-de-sac off of Arbury Road. Properties along Maio Road comprise two-storey detached and semi-detached dwellings with a staggered building line, set well back behind open grass frontages with driveways. Some properties also benefit from garages. The landscaping and open plan design of the properties within Maio Road contribute towards a verdant character and appearance and a sense of spaciousness.
4. The proposal is for the construction of a single storey dwelling. The accommodation within the dwelling would comprise an open plan living and kitchen area and three bedrooms, each with a small ensuite bathroom. Access to a rear garden area would be from a hall between the two rear bedrooms.
5. The proposed dwelling would be sited fairly centrally within the plot with a side garden area on one side and an enclosed bicycle storage area to the other. Due to its width and position within the plot, the proposed dwelling would sit slightly behind the principal front elevation, broadly in line with a set-back section, presumably a converted garage, of the neighbouring property on Maio Road.
6. The proposed dwelling would be extremely close to the neighbouring property and would erode the sense of spaciousness which currently exists. Overall, the position of the proposed dwelling within the street scene would cause the dwelling to appear as a cramped and visually jarring addition which would sit awkwardly within its context.

7. Furthermore, the proposed dwelling would be close to the road and the proposed paved front garden area would bleed into the turning head of the cul-de-sac and into the driveway serving the neighbouring property. I note that some landscaping appears to be proposed and the plans indicate that a number of bushes or shrubs would be planted. Some of these would be along the boundary between the side garden area and the road and others would sit uncomfortably in the middle of a paved area between the frontage of the proposed dwelling and the neighbouring driveway. This layout would fail to reflect the more generous setbacks and green and open character found elsewhere in the area.
8. For these reasons, I consider that the proposed dwelling would cause harm to the character and appearance of the area. Consequently, the proposal would conflict with Policies 55, 56 and 57 of the Cambridge Local Plan, October 2018 (LP). Amongst other things, these policies seek to ensure that development responds positively to its context in respect of siting, scale and form and landscape design and creates distinctive and high quality places. The proposal would also conflict with LP Policy 59 which deals specifically with landscape and the public realm. This policy sets out that external spaces, landscape, public realm and boundary treatments must be designed as an integral part of new development and coordinated with adjacent sites.

Other Matters

9. I acknowledge that the appellant received positive pre-application advice¹ regarding the principle of a new dwelling on the site. I also note that the appellant has amended previous schemes in order to address some of the concerns which were raised. However, the pre-application advice was clear that any scheme would need to be sensitively designed. Moreover, such advice is given without prejudice and the specific details and design of the proposal is such that, whilst in principle a new dwelling would not necessarily be harmful, it would cause harm to the character and appearance of the area.
10. The addition of a new dwelling which would contribute towards the housing supply in the area would be a benefit of the scheme. I also acknowledge the economic benefits of engaging local professionals, trades and suppliers and the ongoing benefit of the occupiers of the proposed dwelling utilising local facilities. These benefits are, however, limited by the small scale of the proposal and must be considered in that context.
11. I have given careful regard to all of the above considerations. However, none are sufficient to dissuade me from the conclusions I have reached that the proposal would cause harm to the character and appearance of the area or to outweigh that harm.

Conclusion

12. For the reasons set out above, the proposal is contrary to the development plan. There are no material considerations that indicate that permission should be granted. Therefore, taking all other matters raised into account, the appeal is dismissed.

L J O'Brien

INSPECTOR

¹ Pre-application Advice Reference 23/50054/PREL V3