The Planning Inspectorate

Appeal Decision

Site Visit made on 7 September 2021

by Mark Caine BSc (Hons) MTPL MRTPI LSRA

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 29 September 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/B4215/W/21/3274790
319 Brooklands Road, Brooklands, Manchester M23 9HE

- 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 On Point Developments Ltd against the decision of Manchester City Council.
- The application Ref 126542/FO/2020, dated 17 March 2020, was refused by notice dated 30 April 2021.
- The development proposed is described as 'Demolition of Existing dwelling and erection of 8 new dwellings.'

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. A revised version of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) was published on 20 July 2021. The main parties have been provided with an opportunity to comment on the revised Framework and its relevance to the determination of this appeal. References to the Framework in this decision therefore reflect the revised Framework.

3. Notwithstanding the description of development set out above, which is taken from the application form, it is clear from the plans, which were amended during the course of the planning application, and accompanying details that the development proposed is the erection of 7 dwellings following the demolition of the existing property. I have determined the appeal on this basis as it more accurately describes the proposal.

Main Issue

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

Reasons

5. The appeal relates to a large detached house that has previously been extended and sits within spacious landscaped grounds, particularly to the front and side. There is also a group of mature trees along the front boundary of the site that are protected by a Tree Preservation Order (TPO). The appeal site is situated on a prominent corner location next to the junction of Brooklands Road and Fairwood Road.

6. Despite the presence of three storey apartment blocks on the opposite side of Brooklands Road, and the variety of house styles in the vicinity, the prevailing character of the area is one of two storey detached and semi-detached

properties in large plots, that have well-defined building lines and are laid out in an orderly linear fashion, set back and behind a frontage of tree coverage. All of these factors combine to provide a pleasant, spacious, and relatively green suburban character.

7. The appellants have drawn my attention to Policy WW7 of the Unitary Development Plan for the City of Manchester 1995 (UDP) which permits the redevelopment or conversion of large properties on Brooklands Road to provide flats or smaller houses, subject to certain design criteria. I have also been made aware that Policy H7 of Manchester's Local Development Framework Core Strategy Development Plan Document 2012 (Core Strategy) and the Manchester Residential Quality Guidance 2017 encourage an increase in density in parts of the city that are well connected to public transport.

8. I appreciate that the proposal has been designed to respect the existing building line along Brooklands Road, that it would have a density range of 32 units per hectare and that it would be constructed in similar materials to other residential properties in the immediate area. I am also satisfied that it would not have an adverse effect on Fairyway Brook and its corridor.

9. Nonetheless, the configuration of two closely spaced rows of houses, positioned perpendicular to each other, and fronting a communal parking area rather than the adjacent roads would be at odds with the prevailing pattern of development in the area. When viewed together, they would also have a much greater footprint, mass, and visual presence along Brooklands Road and Fairwood Road than the existing building and the majority of neighbouring properties in the area.

10. Furthermore, the provision of the second floor accommodation, within the roof space of the block of houses containing Plots 1-3, would result in a poorly composed rear elevation. There would be a number of different roof forms and an uncharacteristic relationship between the lintols of the first floor windows and the building's eaves line. The resultant expanse of brickwork and the bulk of the building would be accentuated by the proposed fenestration, which by reason of its varying proportions, design and arrangement would not have a cohesive appearance. The introduction of a number of dormers within the rear and side roof planes of this row of dwellings would also add visual clutter, thereby drawing the eye, and further accentuating its visual prominence. The staggered setting down of the roof ridges of the proposed dwellings at Plots 4-7 would not vary or reduce the height, bulk and dominance of the proposed development to such a degree as to overcome this harm.

11. The appellant considers the closure of the existing vehicular access road off Brooklands Road to strengthen the landscaping along this boundary. However, the only garden areas to the proposed houses would be provided within the spacious landscaped areas to the front and side of the site. The likely introduction of domestic paraphernalia associated with the number of proposed gardens, including subdividing boundary fences, bin stores, washing lines and garden furniture would inevitably alter its character and significantly reduce the openness of these areas.

12. Whilst this arrangement may provide future management and maintenance of the existing boundary vegetation, the encroachment into these areas of open softly landscaped space would be visually obtrusive when viewed from Brooklands Road and from the rear windows of neighbouring properties.

13. All of these factors would thereby combine to result in the introduction of a conspicuous form of development that would appear out of context with the prevailing pattern of development and spacious character of the immediate surroundings. Conflict would therefore arise with Saved UDP Policy WW7 in this regard, as it would not respect adjoining building heights, retain existing areas of amenity space, or retain a predominantly mature, landscaped character to the front building line.

14. As such the proposal would have a significantly harmful effect on the character and appearance of the area and conflict with Core Strategy Policies SP1 and DM1, which collectively seek, amongst other things, to protect character and appearance and create well designed places. It would also fail to accord with the design objectives of the Framework, specifically Section 12.

Other Matters

15. In support of its case the appellants have put forward that the appeal site comprises previously developed land in a highly accessible location close to Baguely shopping centre, a primary and high school, medical centre and recreational land. It has also been put to me that the redevelopment of the site does not raise 'technical issues' in relation to the historic environment, traffic and transportation, arboricultural impact or flood risk and drainage, and would not harm the living conditions of neighbouring residents. However, these matters did not appear to be contentious in the application and the absence of harm in these respects would be neutral factors that would not weigh in favour of the proposal.

16. The appeal proposal would provide some economic and social benefits. It would make a contribution to the supply of housing, providing family homes in Manchester and Wythenshawe. It would also initially bring employment opportunities during the construction of the houses and reduce the potential requirement to release greenfield land to meet housing need. Nonetheless, given the scale of the proposed housing any benefits in these respects would be contextually somewhat limited and would not outweigh the harm that the proposal would cause. The appeal scheme would not therefore be sustainable development for which the presumption in favour applies.

17. In reaching my findings, I have also had regard to the earlier appeal for 33 retirement living apartments at the site (Ref APP/B4215/W/17/3185323). I note that the appellants consider that all of the concerns previously raised by the Inspector have been addressed in respect of the siting, design, scale and density of the proposal. However, for the reasons given above, I continue to find that the scheme conflicts with local and national planning policy.

Conclusion

18. For the reasons given above, having taken account of the development plan as a whole, along with all other relevant material considerations, I conclude that the appeal should therefore be dismissed.

Mark Caine

INSPECTOR