The Planning Inspectorate

APPENDIX B

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 12 May 2016

by Elaine Gray MA(Hons) MSc IHBC

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government

Decision date: 1st June 2016

Appeal Ref: APP/B3438/W/16/3142816
19 Sawyer Drive, Biddulph, Staffordshire ST8 6SU

- 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 Mr Ian Higginbotham against the decision of Staffordshire Moorlands District Council.
- The application Ref SMD/2015/0691, dated 14 October 2015, was refused by notice which was received by the appellant on 15 December 2015.
- The development proposed is a single detached dwelling adjoining No 19 Sawyer Drive.

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the surrounding area.

Reasons

3. The appeal site is located within a predominantly residential area, and forms part of the garden at 19 Sawyer Drive. In terms of its scale, materials, and overall design, the new dwelling would reflect the character of the adjacent housing in this part of Sawyer Drive.

4. However, I noted on my visit that the layout of the area is characterised by more generous plots on corners next to junctions, and where properties sit adjacent to roads. I accept that the estate incorporates public green spaces that make an important contribution to its appearance. Nonetheless, private garden spaces also play a vital role in the visual amenity of the area.

5. The appeal site forms part of a strip of open land that runs alongside both No 19 and 2 Potters End, which sits to the rear of No 19. This land provides a natural green buffer which softens the edges of the properties, and thus contributes positively to the spacious, leafy character of the surroundings.

6. By infilling the plot and bringing a built form significantly closer to the road, the development would substantially reduce the more open character around the junction. It would erode the contribution of the existing soft landscaping to the pleasant ambiance of the area, thus unacceptably harming its character and appearance.

7. I therefore conclude that the proposal would conflict with Policy DC1 of the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Development Framework Core Strategy Development Plan Document (CS, March 2014), which requires that all development should be well designed and should reinforce local distinctiveness.

8. I have been referred to the planning permission granted for two new dwellings at 9 Sawyer Drive in 2009. However, that permission has lapsed and I do not have the full details of the circumstances that led to these proposals being accepted. I cannot be sure that they represent a direct parallel to the appeal proposal. On my visit, I also viewed the extension to the dwelling at 2 Sawyer Drive constructed with the benefit of a 2012 planning permission, but again, I am unaware of the planning history of this development. In any event, generous corner plots next to junctions remain characteristic and neither of these previous decisions can justify the harm identified.

9. I agree that the location of the appeal site is sustainable, and that the principle of residential development in the area is otherwise acceptable and in accordance with CS Policy SS5. The Council confirms that they are unable to demonstrate a five year housing land supply, and therefore the contribution of one dwelling is to be given weight. However, the National Planning Policy Framework sets out that a core element of sustainability is the impact on the built environment. As it is not a relevant policy for the supply of housing land, CS Policy DC1 is not rendered out of date by the lack of a five year housing land supply. Therefore, I consider that the modest contribution of one dwelling to the housing supply would be insufficient to outweigh the visual harm and conflict with policy identified.

10. For the reasons above, and taking all other matters into account, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Elaine Gray

Inspector