



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 20 January 2015

by **D R Cullingford BA MPhil MRTPI**

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

Decision date: 29 January 2015

Appeal Ref: APP/W4325/A/14/2220956

Leasowe Road, Wallasey Village, Merseyside, CH45 8LP

- This appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is by Mr D J Earlam against the decision of the Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council.
 - The application (ref: OUT/13/00810 and dated 24 January 2014) was refused by notice dated 16 May 2014.
 - The development is described as an 'outline application for 16 dwellings'.
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Decision

1. I dismiss this appeal.

Main issue

2. From what I have read and seen, I consider that this appeal turns on whether the proposal would result in a cramped and incongruous form of development out of kilter with the character of the area and detrimental to the amenities that neighbouring residents might reasonably expect to enjoy.

Reasons

3. The appeal site is a couple of worn paddocks adorned with various sheds and shacks and an assortment of vehicles behind sometimes dense but intermittent hedges. It extends to almost 0.6ha and consists of an elongated remnant of pasture land between slip roads from the dual carriageways of the A554 (to the west) and the established semi-detached suburban dwellings lining Greenleas Road (to the east). Access would be from the north via Greenleas Close, a cul-de-sac through an open plan estate of more recent and mainly detached dwellings. The northern third of the site is relatively narrow, but the southern portion widens out towards Leasowe Road (A551).
4. The proposal is made in outline. Submitted plans show how 10 semi-detached and 6 detached dwellings could be arranged mostly towards the southern half of a long cul-de-sac taken from the end of Greenleas Close. A subsequent plan demonstrates how each dwelling could be provided with a back garden some 10m in length. It is also explained that the relevant requirement to provide 20% of the dwellings as affordable units would be the subject of a section 106 Undertaking at the reserved matters stage, though no appropriate legal document has been submitted in the context either of the application or of this appeal.
5. I appreciate that the overall density of this scheme may well be about 26dph, as a figure not so different from that at Greenleas Close (23dph) or Greenleas Road (25dph). But the elongated nature of the site and its awkward

configuration (barely wide enough to accommodate the modest carriageway proposed before widening southwards) necessitates confining most of the proposed dwellings to the southern portion of the plot. The density there would thus be greater (in the region of 33-35dph) and that, together with the relatively narrow plots and smaller dwellings would create a cramped impression out of keeping with the detached dwellings in Greenleas Close or the established semi-detached suburban villas along Greenleas Road. The cramped and incongruous impression created by the scheme would be accentuated by the juxtaposition of a largely blank flank elevation evident immediately beside a modest back garden or as an interruption of the more spacious hipped-roof rhythm established nearby. Indeed, I am afraid that I consider the illustrative layout to be mediocre with little form or focus, failings that are fundamental and incapable of being addressed by 'loosing certain plots' or other such 'minor' amendments. Hence, I consider that the scheme would fail to provide the basis for securing a high quality design, contrary to the advice in the Framework, or of integrating with its surroundings, contrary to 'saved' policy HS4.

6. The position of the largely blank flank elevation of the dwelling on plot 2, barely 1m from the modest back garden at 7 Greenleas Road, would present a looming and oppressive presence and cast a noticeable shadow there, particularly during the afternoon and early evening when relaxation in the garden might be most welcome. A revised plan shows that the house on plot 1 could be repositioned to accommodate a 10m back garden. But, while that might alleviate the impact on 23 Greenleas Close, it would necessitate the proposed dwelling occupying a position within about 2m of the carriageway, here shown without pavements. This would create an obtrusive feature in the street scene at the very entrance to the scheme. Moreover, the revised plan also shows other properties positioned just 3m back from the pavement and barely achieving the minimum separation distances normally sought across the cul-de-sac. As this would be in the main part of the development, it would emphasise the cramped nature of the scheme and serve to create a claustrophobic and confining prospect for residents. And, the juxtaposition of the carriageway (accommodating about 90 vehicular journeys on a typical weekday) and the rear gardens of the dwellings in Greenleas Road would impair the peace and quiet that residents might otherwise expect in a suburban area such as this. I thus consider that this scheme would fail to provide a good standard of amenity for all, contrary to the advice of the Framework and the requirements of 'saved' policy HS4.
7. I saw that Greenleas Close ends in a shared surface approximately 30m in length that curves between some 6 properties. While the use of this section by the traffic generated from the proposed development might, at first sight, appear to meet the guidance in *Manual for Streets*, it seems to me that there would be elements in the configuration of the cul-de-sac that would undermine the proper application of that concept. Drivers from almost all of the proposed dwellings would approach the shared surface via a virtually straight stretch of carriageway, about 130m in length, and accommodating only 3 fairly modest 'chicanes'. Given the likely tidal nature and low level of traffic, I do not accept that such a configuration would be commensurate with a design speed suitable to appropriately negotiate the shared surface. All the more so, for the proposed development would not appear to entail the use of a shared surface itself (pavements appear to be shown) and the curves

incorporated into the highway alignment would be too shallow to greatly inhibit vehicle speeds on their own. For those reasons, I consider the current arrangements indicated to be unsatisfactory even though I accept that the limited level of traffic likely to materialise would not greatly exacerbate road hazards.

8. I have found that this scheme would fail to provide the basis for securing a high quality design or a good standard of amenity for all, contrary to the advice of the Framework and the requirements of 'saved' policy HS4. Hence, and in spite of considering all the other matters raised, I find nothing sufficiently compelling to alter my conclusion that this appeal should be dismissed.

David Cullingford
INSPECTOR

Richborough Estates