

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 22 November 2016

by Tom Gilbert-Wooldridge BA (Hons) MTP MRTPI IHBC

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

Decision date: 08 December 2016

Appeal Ref: APP/F2605/W/16/3156624

The Old School House, Chapel Street, Shipdham, Norfolk IP25 7LB

- 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 Mick Gore against the decision of Breckland District Council.
 - The application Ref 3PL/2015/0939/F, dated 31 July 2015, was refused by notice dated 12 May 2016.
 - The development proposed is conversion of part of existing Old School House into 2 additional one bedroom flats.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development on highway safety.

Reasons

3. The Old School House in Shipdham is currently being converted into six affordable housing units following the grant of planning permission in 2014 (3PL/2011/0189/F). There is an area of hard surfacing on its eastern side with an access onto the main road through the village (the A1075). To the west of the building are a number of residential properties and an area of open space known as The Green, which provides unrestricted parking along its western and eastern edges. At the time of my late morning site visit, there were vacant spaces, although I recognise that this may not be case in the evenings and at weekends when more people tend to be at home. There is a post office and doctors' surgery opposite The Green which generate traffic movements and, in the case of the post office in particular, on-street parking.
 4. The A1075 is designated by the local highway authority as a 2C Principal Route that carries traffic between local centres and the primary/trunk road network. At the time of my site visit, the road had a regular flow of traffic including lorries, with a speed limit of 30mph. On-street parking outside the post office slowed the movement of vehicles, but road conditions were not particularly congested. However, I accept that on-street parking will fluctuate throughout the day and for a busy road such as the A1075 this would have implications for the flow of traffic and increase the risk of accidents.
 5. The 2014 planning permission includes one parking space per unit. I have not been provided with the approved plans, but it would appear that these spaces would be located within the area of hard surfacing and would necessitate the demolition of a single storey rear extension. There is also a recent planning
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permission from May 2016(3PL/2015/1050/F) for the creation of additional bedrooms in five of the six units. Again, I do not have the approved plans, but it would appear the same parking layout from the 2014 permission would be used.

6. The proposed development seeks to retain most of the single storey rear extension to accommodate two additional flats. This increases the total parking requirement to eight spaces in a reduced area of hard surfacing. The Block Plan drawing number 3A shows nine spaces within the area of hard surfacing.
7. While there is sufficient room for nine spaces, they are tightly positioned either next to the building or along the eastern boundary. Given the busy nature of the A1075 and the tight geometry of the site, cars are most likely to drive onto the site and into any given space in forward gear. In order to avoid reversing onto the A1075 which is not desirable, cars would need to manoeuvre on site to leave it in a forward gear.
8. I have not been provided with any detailed analysis of manoeuvrability, so have focused my assessment on the Block Plan and my site observations. Cars in spaces 1 and 2 could reverse 90 degrees towards spaces 3 and 4, and vice versa, but the north-east corner of the single storey rear extension and any vehicle parked in space 5 would make this difficult. Cars in spaces 6 to 9 would need to reverse 90 degrees to the south, but the gap to the flank wall of the building which would contain Unit 1 is narrow and less than the 6 metres recommended by the government's Manual for Streets technical guidance. This would represent an awkward manoeuvre, particularly if every space was occupied by a car. Based on the overall parking layout, I consider that it would be difficult for cars to manoeuvre out of most of the on-site parking spaces to leave the site in forward gear.
9. The Block Plan shows five parking spaces on The Green, but I have no evidence that these spaces are in the appellant's ownership or have been allocated specifically for this development. It is feasible for occupants of The Old School House to park vehicles along The Green given its unrestricted parking, but this is a shared resource and a space is not guaranteed.
10. I accept that visibility from the access onto the main road is adequate for vehicles leaving the site in forward gear, but this does not outweigh the difficulties that the car parking layout would present in manoeuvring to leave in such a gear. Thus, it does not alter my findings. Furthermore, notwithstanding apparently positive advice given by the local highway authority earlier on in the application process, the evidence before me indicates the local highway authority has been consistent in its objections to this proposal.
11. I consider that the layout of parking spaces within the site would provide inadequate manoeuvring facilities and would not encourage occupants of the development to use them. As such, there is an increased likelihood of on-street parking and an increased risk to highway safety through the disruption of traffic flows and the potential for accidents.
12. Concluding on the main issue, the proposed development would have an unacceptable and harmful effect on highway safety. Therefore, it would not accord with Policy DC19 of the Breckland Core Strategy and Development Control Policies Development Plan Document 2001-2026 which requires

development to reflect the need for off-road parking provision in circumstances where it would ensure the satisfactory functioning of the highway network.

Other Matters

13. I concur with the appellant that the proposal would have no adverse effects on living conditions for occupants of adjoining land and buildings, and would not harm the character and appearance of the area, including Shipdham Conservation Area. However, this does not outweigh the harm I have identified with regards to highway safety.

Conclusion

14. For the reasons given above, and having had regard to all other matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Tom Gilbert-Wooldridge

INSPECTOR