

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 17 January 2017

by Grahame Gould BA MPhil MRTPI

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

Decision date: 8th February 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/X0360/W/16/3159465

Land adjacent to 111 Old Bath Road, Charvil RG10 9QN

- 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 Miss Rebecca Smith of Charter House Planning Limited against the decision of Wokingham Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 160849, dated 31 March 2016, was refused by notice dated 2 June 2016.
 - The development proposed is described as 'demolition of existing garage and erection of a high quality new home'.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Application for costs

2. An application for costs was made by Rebecca Smith of Charter House Planning Limited against Wokingham Borough Council. That application is the subject of a separate decision.

Main Issues

3. The main issues are the effect of the development on: the character and appearance of the area; and the trees subject to a tree preservation order (TPO) at 117 Old Bath Road (No 117).

Reasons

Character and Appearance

4. The development would involve the demolition of a double garage to the side of 111 Old Bath Road (No 111) and the construction of a two storey, two bedroom detached house.
5. The development plot would be a comparatively narrow one for the area, being around 7.5 metres in width¹ and this in turn would mean that the house would also be relatively narrow. Within the vicinity of No 111, on the northern side of Old Bath Road, there are a mixture of semi-detached houses and detached chalet bungalows and those properties, either individually or in pairs, have quite wide footprints, a characteristic that the proposed house would not share, given its width.

¹ Dimension taken from the Council's officer report

6. As a consequence of the house's limited width it has been designed to have a dummy (false) pitched roof. The pitch of the roof would be relatively steep, at around 60 degrees according to the Council, and this roof would in effect be a mansard. The resulting roof would be uncharacteristic of the general mix of shallower pitched hipped or gable ended roofs present in Old Bath Road, with the existing properties having ridge lines running parallel with the road. There would be sufficient space about the new house for it to be apparent that its roof would have an alien appearance in the streetscene. In my opinion the reliance on a dummy pitched roof is an indication that this would be an unduly intensive form of development for the site.
7. I recognise that the flat block at River Court, on the opposite side of the street, has a dummy pitched roof, but that building is of a scale that creates its own distinctive character. I therefore consider that River Court's roof design does not provide a justification for a dummy pitched roof being incorporated into the design for the house. I therefore find that the poor appearance of the house's roof means that this development would not be of a good design.
8. Old Bath Road is characterised by dwellings of varying types and designs and I accept that there is nothing inherently wrong with contemporary and traditional design being juxtaposed with one another. However, I have found that the appearance of the house's roof would be unacceptable and this means that the composition of the building, in its totality, would not be of a high quality, resulting in a contemporary design that would be disrespectful of its surroundings. While the provision of some new soft landscaping in front of the house would be a welcome addition to the streetscene, its presence would not address the harmful aspects of the development's appearance that I have identified.
9. When taken together the uncharacteristic width and roof design for the house would result in this development having an incongruous appearance. I therefore conclude that the development would be harmful to the character and appearance of the area. There would therefore be conflict with Policies CP1 and CP3 of the 'Wokingham Borough Local Development Framework Adopted Core Strategy Development Plan Document' of 2010 (the Core Strategy), Policies CC01 and TB06 of the 'Wokingham Borough Development Plan Adopted Managing Development Delivery Local Plan' of 2014 (the Local Plan), the Council's Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document of 2012 and the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework), most particularly the fourth core planning principle (paragraph 17) and paragraphs 56, 58, 60, 63 and 64. That is because the development would be of a poor design, have an inappropriate built form and would not add to the overall quality of the area.

Trees

10. There are two, 17 metre tall, Lime trees, identified as T1 and T2 by the appellant's arboricultural consultant, which are sited towards the front of No 117 and would therefore be in close proximity to the house. Trees T1 and T2 are subject to a TPO and the appellant's arboricultural consultant has assessed both of these trees as being of the highest quality, using the classification system set out in British Standard 5837:2012 'Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction – recommendations' (the British

Standard). The front of the house and its drive/forecourt parking area would be within the root protection zones (RPZ) for trees T1 and T2.

11. Based upon trial pits that have been dug the appellant has submitted that none of tree T1's or T2's 'significant roots' are present at depths within the grounds of No 111 that would be impacted upon by the construction of the house. The appellant, however, recognises that it would be prudent to adopt a non-dig construction methodology in the RPZ's of trees T1 and T2. In order to safeguard the trees during the construction phase of the development it has been submitted for the appellant that it would be necessary for an arboricultural method statement to be prepared and submitted for the Council's approval prior to the commencement of the development.
12. The arboricultural evidence submitted with the appeal has demonstrated to me that, with implementation of the no dig construction methodology and the submission of an arboricultural method statement, the house could be built without harm being caused to the protected trees.
13. On this issue I therefore conclude that the development could be implemented in a manner without harm being caused to the trees that are subject to the TPO. I therefore find that there would be no conflict with Policy CP3 of the Core Strategy, Policies CC03 and TB21 of the Local Plan and paragraph 118 of the Framework because the house could be constructed so as to allow for the retention of the protected trees.

Other Matters

14. I accept that this development would not be harmful to the living conditions of the occupiers of either No 111 or 117 and that it would also be unobjectionable in highways and biodiversity terms. The absence of harm with respect to those matters weighs in favour of this proposal, however, I find those aspects of the development to be outweighed by the harm to the character and appearance of the area that would arise.

Conclusions

15. I have found that the development could, with the imposition of appropriate planning conditions, be implemented in a manner that would safeguard the neighbouring protected trees. However, the plot for the house would be unduly narrow for the area and the design of the dwelling would be poor and those aspects of the development give rise to unacceptable harm to the character and appearance of the area. The harm that I have identified could not be overcome by the imposition of reasonable planning conditions. The appeal is therefore dismissed.

Grahame Gould

INSPECTOR