
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 20 April 2017

by David L Morgan BA MA (T&CP) MA (Bld Con IoAAS) MRTPI IHBC
an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government

Decision date: 5th May 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/Q3115/W/16/3164682
7 Trent Road, Didcot OX11 7QQ

- 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 and Mrs Barnes against the decision of South Oxfordshire District Council.
- The application Ref P16/S3163/FUL, dated 12 September 2016, was refused by notice dated 30 November 2016.
- The development proposed is described as 'The proposal is to replace the existing double garage with a new detached 2 bedroom dwelling, sitting on the same site and location as the current building. Very much infill development. There is an existing driveway and two new parking bays to the front of the proposed new property will be created. The garden for the new dwelling will run along the line of the new building to the most southern point of the existing garden, utilising the existing garden space with the erection of a new 6ft fence to distinguish the new boundary line'.

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. This is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

3. The appeal site lies within what the appellants refer to as the Ladygrove Estate, an extensive modern residential neighbourhood comprised of a mix of dwelling types arranged off arterial roads, courts, pedestrian routes and areas of extensive public open space. The site itself is formed out of the curtilage of No.7 Trent Road, and would ostensibly sit on the site of a single storey pyramidal roofed double garage, incorporating an element of the existing dwellings amenity space to make similar provision of its future occupiers.
4. No.7 lies at the apex of a gentle curve in the road behind an existing timber fence fronting a broad verge. This part of Trent Road is especially verdant with semi-mature trees populating the verge and taller stands set within the boundaries of other properties.

5. As the appellants point out, the layout of dwellings and indeed the architectural style of the estate express both a degree of informality and variety. Buildings are set both immediately behind pavements, are set back behind broad verges and boundary treatments and the dwellings themselves incorporate a variety of forms, detailing and materials. Whilst the architecture of the estate might not be said to exhibit a style as such, many of the dwellings incorporate details, such as gables and gablets, elements of timbering and timber cladding and components of render amid the predominant brick that suggest a theme of modern neo-vernacular appearance that adds to this variety and distinctiveness. This diversity is indeed one of the estates overriding characteristics, and with the ensemble of paths, planting and open spaces, now with an evident level of maturity, it has a unified and resolved, and generally very attractive character.
6. The proposed dwelling, of two storeys and oblong form beneath a gabled pitched roof, would sit a little back from the current foot print of the garage and at a pronounced angle to No.7 though parallel with the adjacent No. 5 immediately to the east. Car parking spaces would be arranged in tandem at the front, off a turning area, whilst private amenity space would be provided to the rear in the form of a triangular section garden.
7. It is the case that the existing garage does at present define the extent of built form on this section of the road frontage. It is moreover also the case that the building line here is irregular, with houses to the west standing at varying distances from the road edge. However, the presence of the garage here is mitigated not only by its single storey height but also by the pyramidal form of its roof, that allows it to sit, notwithstanding its forward location, subserviently within the street scene in relation to its neighbours.
8. The proposed dwelling however, because of its full two storey height and uncompromising orthogonal or oblong form, would obtrude conspicuously and incongruously into the street scene, a presence made more apparent due to its location in the apex of the curve in the road. This visual incongruity would be made all the more acute by its close proximity to No.5 and its awkward angled juxtaposition with and proximity to No. 7. Moreover, the bland elevational treatment, devoid of the architectural details and embellishments of its neighbours, would render it more incongruous still within its context.
9. Furthermore, whilst I acknowledge the established informality of the existing building line (exemplified by No.11), this also serves to allow views between dwellings to the greenery beyond. Notwithstanding the presence of the existing garage, the proposed development, because of the above attributes, would close down this sense of visual permeability, compounding the harms already identified above. The sense here would indeed be of cramped and uncomfortable relationship with its neighbours, causing material harm to the character and appearance of the area.
10. For all these reasons therefore, I conclude the proposed development would conflict with policies CSQ3 of the South Oxfordshire Core Strategy and with saved policies G2, D1 and H4 of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011, all of which seek, amongst other matters, to require that proposed development responds positively to and respects the character of the site and its surroundings, protects and reinforces local distinctiveness and safeguards the character and appearance of an area. All these are consistent with the aims of

paragraph 64 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework), which advises that permission should be refused for development of poor design.

Other matters

11. I note the appellant's point that the location of the development is sustainable, being close to local services, facilities and employment. This, in the context of the broad aims of the framework, garners a measure of weight in favour of the proposals. I also note that the appellants indicate that there is a 'well publicised need for new housing in Didcot, with an enormous shortfall'. Whilst it is not made clear that at the present this means the Council cannot currently demonstrate a 5 year supply of housing land and all that follows with it, I readily accept that a further new dwelling would contribute to boosting local housing supply. This is again consistent with the objectives of the Framework in respect of housing, which anticipates significantly boosting such supply. This also garners a measure of weight in favour of the proposals.
12. I have also noted the reference made by the appellants to other developments in the road, including those at Nos 17 and 19. Whilst these clearly suggest that some forms of infill development or enlargement of existing structures may be achievable, the detailed circumstances of such cases are not before me and this necessarily limits the weight I afford them in the consideration of this case.

Conclusion

13. I rightly give weight to the provision of a further dwelling in a sustainable location adding incrementally to the local supply of housing. However, these merits are, in the scheme of things, modest and are in my view clearly outweighed by the material harm the proposals would cause the character and appearance of the area and the conflict with the policies of the development plan that would result.
14. For all these reasons given above and having taken all matters into account, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

David Morgan

Inspector