The Planning Inspectorate

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 25 April 2017

by K Taylor BSc (Hons) PGDip MRTPI

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

Decision date: 12th May 2017.

Appeal Ref: APP/V3310/W/17/3167391
The Rosary, Chapel Road, Rooksbridge BS26 2TB

- 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 C Jones against the decision of Sedgemoor District Council.
- The application Ref 24/16/00027, dated 5 September 2016, was refused by notice dated 6 December 2016.
- The development proposed is the erection of 2 x semi-detached dwellings. One dwelling to have a garage attached to the side, one to have a detached garage to the frontage.

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

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

Reasons

Character and appearance

3. The appeal site is in an area of residential character comprising properties of various styles. However the proposed dwellings would sit between Cloverdale and South View House which appear to be late 19th century properties. These are substantial two storey dwellings, with prominent front bay windows and wide, well-proportioned, symmetrical frontages. Both are impressive dwellings with a significant presence within the street scene. They are set back from the road with varying degrees of soft landscaping to their fronts, creating a sense of space and a verdant character. These properties contribute positively to the character and appearance of the area.

4. The proposed dwellings would be of a very simple form, with only small porches to articulate the front elevations; they would lack the symmetry, and architectural interest of the adjoining properties. Seen in the context of the adjoining, substantial, neighbouring dwellings, the two appeal dwellings would appear unduly narrow and lack the presence of these neighbouring properties. The free standing garage to the front of plot 1 and the forward projecting garage attached to plot 2 would be conspicuous features in an area where front gardens are generally free from such built form. The front of the site would be dominated by hard landscaping and the garages, in stark contrast to the open and landscaped setting of the adjoining properties. For these reasons the scheme would appear discordant in this context and unacceptably harm the character and appearance of the locality.

5. Planning permission has been granted for three dwellings on the site and the land to the rear (the consented scheme). It appears that scheme had two dwellings at the bottom of the site, which have since been constructed, and a five bedroom house to the front. The appeal scheme would replace the larger front property. The design of the appeal scheme is similar to the dwellings that have been built to the rear of the site. Those dwellings are set well back from the road and do not have the same relationship with the neighbouring dwellings or the street as the appeal dwellings would. The presence of those dwellings does not, therefore, persuade me that the appeal scheme is acceptable.

6. The development would be harmful to the character and appearance of the area. It is contrary to Policy D 2 of the Sedgemoor Core Strategy 2006-27 which seeks to secure high quality design that responds positively to, and reflects, particular local characteristics. The proposal is also in conflict with the National Planning Policy Framework. This emphasises that it is proper to seek to reinforce local distinctiveness and states that permission should be refused for development of poor design that fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of the area.

Other matters

7. The development would provide an additional dwelling when compared to the consented scheme, in compliance with the thrust of national policy to encourage the increase in housing stock. However this would only be a single additional dwelling. The Council state that there is a healthy housing land supply and there is no evidence to dispute this. I, therefore, give this factor only limited weight. I have no convincing evidence that the appeal scheme would better address the local housing need, and, in any event, this factor would not outweigh the harm I have identified.

8. The development accords with a number of other development plan policies; this only indicates a lack of harm in these particular respects. There would also be no harm to the living conditions of the occupiers of neighbouring dwellings due to the siting of the proposed houses and separation from neighbouring properties. These factors are neutral in the overall planning balance.

9. I note that planning permission has been granted for a single, larger, dwelling on this site, and the application, subject of this appeal, was recommended for approval by the Council's professional officers. I have taken these factors into account, but I have reached my own conclusion on the effect of the development on the character and appearance of the area.

Conclusion

10. Although some benefits would arise from the net addition of an extra dwelling to the housing stock, this does not outweigh the harm to the character and appearance of the area. The adverse effects are sufficient to mean that the proposal would conflict with the development plan when taken as a whole and I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

K Taylor

INSPECTOR