
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 18 May 2017

by Andrew Owen BA(Hons) MA MRTPI

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

Decision date: 16 June 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/K0425/W/16/3161935

25 Mayhew Crescent, High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire HP13 6BX

- 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 Ms Deborah Young against the decision of Wycombe District Council.
 - The application Ref 16/05153/FUL, dated 21 January 2016, was refused by notice dated 27 April 2016.
 - The development proposed is erection of a 3 bed, two storey dwelling with room in roof within the residential curtilage of 25 Mayhew Crescent. Demolition of the existing detached double garage and construction of a replacement double garage at a lower level and incorporating a roof terrace for the existing dwelling. Enlargement of existing pedestrian access along with associated external and landscaping works.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area, and whether the development would provide acceptable living conditions for its occupiers, and for the occupiers of 25 Mayhew Crescent, in respect of amenity space.

Reasons

Policy background

3. The Council do not dispute that they do not have a five year supply of housing. In such circumstances the fourth bullet point of paragraph 14 of the Framework instructs that permission should be granted unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits when assessed against the policies in the Framework taken as a whole.
 4. Two of the core planning principles of the Framework are that development should take account of the character of the area, and should seek a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of buildings. Policy G3 and Appendix 1 of the Wycombe District Local Plan (the 'Local Plan') expects development to respect local context, and Policy CS19 of the Wycombe Development Framework Core Strategy (the 'Core Strategy') requires, among other things, the creation of attractive public environments and a high standard of layout. Policy G8 of the Local Plan requires development to safeguard the
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future amenity of residents. These policies are therefore consistent with the Framework.

Character and appearance

5. The appeal site is located on the corner of Mayhew Crescent and Hepplewhite Close ('the Close'). The vicinity is strongly characterised by its topography with the land falling considerably from west to east. As a result, the floor level of the existing house is almost three metres higher than the pavement in the Close along its side boundary. The proposed dwelling would be attached to, but stepped down from, the existing house by around a metre and would be around the same width as No 25. Therefore the proposal would be considerably closer to, and higher than, the pavement in the Close.
6. Currently the part of the site on which the dwelling would be built is used as garden. Although it is enclosed by a close-boarded fence and sits above a tall retaining wall, it contributes to the openness of the road junction which is primarily created by the open plan nature of the nearby front gardens in the Close and Mayhew Crescent. I acknowledge the existing house already projects slightly forward of the building line along the Close, however the proposed dwelling would project significantly further forward than this. The forward position of the house, in combination with its height above the pavement, means the development would appear overbearing, dominant and incongruous in the street scene, interrupting the open character of this junction.
7. Furthermore, the proposal would result in a short terrace of three dwellings. All the other houses in the surrounding area are semi-detached properties which creates a defining local characteristic. The proposal would contrast with this and so, for this reason also, would appear incompatible with its context.
8. It is not disputed that the design of the house would be such that it would, in this respect, blend in with its surroundings, and I recognise that the flank elevation would have greater visual interest than the existing side face of No 25. Nonetheless this does little to address the dominance of the development.
9. I have been alerted to a number of extensions and alterations at No 27. However these are not comparable to the proposal before me and their effect on the character and appearance of the area is therefore different. Also, whilst I note the house on the corner of Mayhew Crescent and Adam Close has a large two-storey side extension, it sits much lower than the pavement at Adam Close and so also does not compare with the appeal proposal. The other examples identified are further afield and do not contribute to the context of the appeal site.
10. Consequently the incongruity of the development in its setting would mean it would harm the character and appearance of the area. As such it would contrast with Policy G3 and Appendix 1 of the Local Plan, Policy CS19 of the Core Strategy and the Framework. It would also generally conflict with the design guidance in the Housing Intensification Supplementary Planning Document.

Amenity space

11. The development would occupy the majority of the existing garden at No 25, leading to a considerable reduction in the amount of garden space. However

the remaining garden to serve No 25, which would be extended over the proposed garage, would be comparable to those at other properties nearby in terms of its size and degree of overlooking. Similarly I consider the garden to serve the proposed house, though small, would be sufficient for the modestly sized unit. Indeed, the lack of any quantitative standards means I have no reason to come to a contrary view.

12. Consequently, the proposal would provide acceptable living conditions for its occupiers and for the occupiers of No 25 and therefore it accords with Policy G8 of the Local Plan. It would also generally accord with Policy G3 and Appendix 1 of the Local Plan and Policy CS19 of the Core Strategy.

Planning balance and conclusion

13. I consider that the development would provide satisfactory amenity space for its future occupiers and the occupiers of No 25. Also I recognise the significant public support for the development and I note it is not disputed between the parties that the site is sustainably located. Nonetheless these factors would be significantly and demonstrably outweighed by the failure of the development to respect the character and appearance of the area.
14. I accept the Framework seeks to significantly boost the supply of housing. However the provision of one dwelling would have minimal effect on the supply of housing and would be of little benefit from a social and economic point of view.
15. Therefore, for the reasons given above, and taking account of all other considerations, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Andrew Owen

INSPECTOR