
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 5 June 2017

by Chris Couper BA (Hons) DipTP MRTPI

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

Decision date: 16 June 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/V3120/W/17/3171578

16 Rowles Close, Kennington, Oxford, Oxfordshire OX1 5LX

- 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 David Hackett against the decision of Vale of White Horse District Council.
 - The application Ref P16/V2401/FUL, dated 19 September 2016, was refused by notice dated 18 January 2017.
 - The development proposed is a detached two storey dwelling with parking and amenity spaces. Demolition of the existing garage and the construction of a replacement garage for 16 Rowles Close, Kennington.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

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

Reasons

3. The dwellings on Rowles Close have a fairly consistent style and appearance. They are generally on small plots, with their front elevations facing the road, and are set back a short distance from it.
 4. In contrast, the properties on the nearby eastern side of Upper Road are typically much larger, with long rear gardens. The dwellings are set back from the road in a fairly uniform and linear building line. Although the rear boundaries of the properties are not often evident in the Upper Road streetscene, there is an impression of spaciousness looking between the buildings to the landscaped backdrop or to the distant buildings beyond. Notwithstanding the diverse style of the buildings, and the shorter rear garden approved for the scheme of flats adjacent to no. 145, those features give this part of Upper Road a strong, locally distinctive character.
 5. The appeal site is set well back from Rowles Close, and whilst it would have a limited impact on that streetscene, a new dwelling here would appear at odds with the siting of the other dwellings on this road. However, it would only generally be seen in oblique views from the rear faces or gardens of some nearby Rowles Close properties. The style, scale, form and materials of the
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proposal would respect the appearance of the existing buildings on Rowles Close, and it would be orientated similarly to no. 16.

6. Given the scheme's location, orientation, and access, the appellant maintains that the overriding character assessment should be made with regards its impact on Rowles Close. I disagree. In my view the dwelling would be visible from Upper Road through the gaps between the buildings. Given its two storey height and its siting relatively close to the rear of no. 145 and the adjacent flats, it would be much more noticeable than other buildings to the rear of nearby Upper Road properties. Although it would not be prominent in the streetscene, it would nonetheless appear at odds with this area's more spacious character.
7. Moreover, the conflict with this area's established pattern of development would be very clear from the rear elevations of nearby properties on Upper Road and their gardens. That harmful impact on the local grain of development would be exacerbated by the proposed dwelling's angled siting relative to the Upper Road properties. Whilst the appellant refers to Kennington's rapid growth from the 1920s, its varied style and lack of homogeneity, and to some recent development on Rowles Close, those considerations do not change my findings regarding this scheme's incongruity in this location.
8. The scheme would significantly harm the character and appearance of the area. It would therefore conflict with the requirements of Core Policy 37 of the Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031 Part 1 Strategic Site and Policies (2016) ('LP') that development shall respond positively to the site and its surroundings, and reinforce local identity. It would also conflict with the requirements for good design which reinforces local distinctiveness at paragraphs 56, 60 and 64 of the National Planning Policy Framework ('Framework'), and with the broadly similar objectives at ID:26-007-20140306 of the Planning Practice Guidance.
9. Additionally the scheme would not fully accord with one of the fundamental objectives of the Vale of White Horse Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document 2015 that new development should integrate and share common characteristics with its locality.
10. In its favour, the proposal would make an effective use of land in a sustainable location in a Larger Village. In those regards, and in the small contribution it would make to the supply of housing, it would address some of the broad objectives of the development plan, including LP Core Policies 3, 4 and 8, and the Framework.
11. However, those limited benefits do not outweigh the significant harm that would be caused to the area's character and appearance. Given that environmental harm, the scheme would not be the sustainable development for which LP Core Policy 1 and the Framework place a presumption in favour. Consequently, although the scheme would address some policy objectives, it would conflict with the development plan when considered as a whole. Thus, having regard to all other matters raised, the appeal is dismissed.

Chris Couper

INSPECTOR