
Appeal Decisions

Site visit made on 6 September 2017

by H Butcher BSc (Hons) MSc MRTPI

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

Decision date: 11 September 2017

Appeal A Ref: APP/Q3115/W/17/3166487

Oldfield House, Horsepond Road, Gallowstree Common, Reading, RG4 9BX

- 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 & Mrs J Langford against the decision of South Oxfordshire District Council.
 - The application Ref P16/S2768/FUL, dated 12 August 2016, was refused by notice dated 20 December 2016.
 - The development proposed is the extension and conversion of existing outbuilding to form new 2-bedroom dwelling with attached garage.
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Appeal Ref: APP/Q3115/W/17/3175474

Oldfield House, Horsepond Road, Gallowstree Common, Reading, RG4 9BX

- 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 & Mrs J Langford against the decision of South Oxfordshire District Council.
 - The application Ref P17/S0059/FUL, dated 11 November 2016, was refused by notice dated 24 March 2017.
 - The development proposed is a new dwelling for self-build on land within residential curtilage of Oldfield House.
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Decision

1. Appeal A is dismissed and Appeal B is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. As set out above, there are two appeals. Both appeals concern the creation of a new dwelling, although they differ in terms of the position of each dwelling within the site. Furthermore, Appeal A is for the conversion of an existing outbuilding whereas Appeal B is a new build. Nevertheless, both appeals are closely related in terms of their immediate context. Furthermore, the main issue in both appeals is the same. Therefore, although I have considered each proposal on its individual merits, to avoid duplication I have dealt with the two schemes together except where otherwise indicated.
3. Both appeals were amended following submission to the Council but prior to their determination. In respect of Appeal A the scale of extensions were reduced to create a two rather than three bedroom dwelling, the design altered and an additional access proposed. In Appeal B the new access was amended to incorporate adequate visibility splays. The evidence before me suggests all relevant parties were made aware of the amendments to Appeal A therefore I

have determined the appeal on this basis and amended the description of development in the banner heading above accordingly. In the case of Appeal B the amended access does not alter the substance of the scheme and as such no party would be prejudiced by my determining this appeal on the basis of the revised plans.

Main Issue

4. The main issue in both appeals is the effect of the developments on the character and appearance of the surrounding area and the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

Reasons

5. Oldfield House is a large detached chalet style property which sits more or less central to its spacious plot. As such it has space to the front, sides and rear. It sits on the edge of the settlement of Gallowstree Common within the Chilterns AONB. To the north, east and west of the appeal site is largely open countryside. To the south is residential development. Here the density of development is higher than the appeal site with plots sizes generally being smaller. Consequently the particularly spacious character of the appeal site provides an area of transition between the settlement of Gallowstree Common and the surrounding countryside.
6. Policy CSR1 of the South Oxfordshire Core Strategy (2012) (CS) allows infill development in villages such as Gallowstree Common. The supporting text to this policy defines infill development as: "...the filling of a small gap in an otherwise built-up frontage or on other sites within settlements where the site is closely surrounded by buildings."
7. In the case of Appeal A the proposal would constitute infill development as it would sit between Oldfield House and the adjacent property Sundown therefore there would be no conflict with Policy CSR1. However, the resulting dwelling would appear rather narrow when viewed from the front, emphasised by the conversely wide front elevations of Oldfield House and Sundown. The newly created plot in comparison to what would be retained for Oldfield House, and that of Sundown, would also appear uncharacteristically narrow. Consequently the development would have a cramped and contrived appearance which would be out of character with its spacious edge of settlement location. The fact that the proposed dwelling would sit forward of Oldfield House would further draw attention to this.
8. In Appeal B a new single storey dwelling is proposed on the north side of Oldfield House which directly abuts open countryside. In this case the proposal would be contrary to Policy CSR1 of the CS as the new dwelling would not be surrounded by buildings. Furthermore, given the transitional nature of the appeal site, as described above, the creation of, again, a relatively narrow plot, given its immediate context, would be at odds with the more spacious pattern of development which currently exists here. Although presently screened from view by mature hedging and trees the new access would open up the site to public views.
9. I note that the dwelling as proposed in Appeal B would have a similar footprint, outline and appearance to that of a leisure complex recently granted planning permission at the appeal site (ref P15/S3960/HH). However, the proposal

before me is materially different as it would result in the creation of a separate plot of land which would be visually harmful for the reasons described above.

10. Both Appeal A and Appeal B would therefore be harmful to the character and appearance of the surrounding area and the Chilterns AONB and as such would be contrary to Policies CSEN1 and CSQ3 of the CS and G2, C4, D1 and H4 of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011. Appeal B would also conflict with Policy CSR1 of the CS as set out above. These policies, generally speaking, require high quality design which responds to and respects the character of its site and surroundings, including existing settlement patterns, with high priority to be given to the conservation and enhancement of AONBs. I am also conscious that, as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework, great weight should be given to conserving landscape and scenic beauty in AONBs. Furthermore, the South Oxfordshire Design Guide notes that the development edge to existing landscape should be informal and least dense to help create a softer edge. Both proposals would be contrary to this advice.
11. The appellant makes the point that the Council cannot demonstrate a 5 year supply of deliverable housing and highlights that the proposals would add to housing supply and support rural facilities and services. These benefits, would, however, be modest given the scale of each development. I therefore consider that the adverse impacts I have outlined above in terms of harm to the surrounding area and AONB significantly and demonstrably outweigh these benefits.
12. Representations made on both sides regarding the detailed design of the dwellings do not alter my findings above. Furthermore, developments referred to which include sites at Greenways and The Old Chapel in Gallowstree Common do not provide an immediate context to the appeal site, on which this appeal turns. That the developments would be self-build does not outweigh the harm I have found.
13. For the above reasons, and having had regard to all matters raised, Appeal A is dismissed and Appeal B is dismissed.

Hayley Butcher

INSPECTOR