



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 29 May 2019

by M Aqbal BA (Hons) DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 01 August 2019

Appeal Ref: APP/X0360/W/18/3211546

21 Duffield Road, Woodley, Reading RG5 4RL

- 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 R Sylvester against the decision of Wokingham Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 173614, dated 11 December 2017, was refused by notice dated 20 March 2018.
 - The development proposed is erection of 6 no. two storey dwellings with associated parking and landscaping following the demolition of the existing property.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matter

2. A completed Unilateral Undertaking (UU) made under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) was submitted by the appellant during the course of the appeal. I shall consider this further in my decision.

Main Issues

3. The main issues are the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the area; whether the proposal would make provision for affordable housing; and, the effect of the proposed development on a non-designated heritage asset.

Reasons

Character and appearance

4. The appeal site comprises a large detached dwelling within a substantial plot. This is divided into the main garden including an area to the rear of 23 Duffield Road and a separate area between the dwelling and the road which is largely occupied by a swimming pool and pool house. Both these areas contain trees and hedging to the boundaries. The site is accessed via a driveway from the road with a wide grass verge adjacent to it along the northern boundary containing a number of mature trees, several of which are covered by a Tree Protection Order (TPO). The driveway also leads to a detached garage and store.
5. Development either side of the site, in particular along the west side of Duffield Road, between Willow Bank Primary School and the railway bridge mainly comprises large, individually designed detached dwellings in a strong linear form relative to the highway, along a broadly consistent building line. These dwellings

are set behind deep frontages and extensive rear gardens, which generally benefit from mature landscaping. There are boundary treatments along the frontage of the site and neighbouring properties. However, the space about the dwellings, along with associated landscaping are apparent and cumulatively provide for a distinctively spacious and verdant character and appearance to the area.

6. The site occupies a larger plot than those adjacent to it, and the orientation and siting of the dwelling at the site relative to those either side of it is different. Nonetheless, the site is broadly consistent with the prevailing pattern of development and makes a positive contribution to the quality of the area.
7. There is some variation in the pattern of development in the area. This includes Alderley Close and Highcliffe Close along with other cul-de-sac and non-linear layouts. These however do not significantly alter the prevailing character of the area, as described above.
8. Notwithstanding the attention to design and materials to reflect local vernacular styles, the proposal would introduce a small cul-de-sac at the site. This includes two dwellings towards the front, either side of the new centrally located access road. One of these properties would project appreciably forward of 17 Duffield Road. This arrangement would appear particularly discordant and disrupt the existing pattern of development.
9. The access road would lead to a further pair of detached and semi-detached houses, to the rear of the site. These predominantly two-storey sizeable family dwellings along with carports, in close proximity of each other, and in parts to boundaries would result in the introduction of an intensive urban form within the site. This includes a considerable amount of hard surfacing for parking and turning areas along with boundary fencing. Such an arrangement would appear contrived and would contrast with the predominant pattern of development here, where dwellings have more generous space about them. The proposed scheme would also result in the loss of some landscaping, while this is not protected it still contributes to the quality of the site and area. Any new planting would take some time to establish.
10. Some of the larger retained trees would be incorporated into the gardens of Plots 1, 2 and 3. On the available evidence, I am satisfied that such layouts would not give rise to any significant issues associated with locating large trees in small gardens or result in pressure for the removal or significant reduction in trees, subject to appropriate conditions. Any encroachment of the modest footings of some of the carports into the root protection areas of retained trees would be limited. This, along with the suggested 'no dig' construction methods for surfaces near these trees would be sufficient to safeguard these during construction.
11. Nonetheless, in light of the above, development in the form and layout proposed would erode the spacious and verdant character and quality of the area. This, to a lesser or greater extent, would be visible from within the site, the highway and adjacent land and properties and would appear as an incongruous form of tandem development which would have a significant adverse visual effect on the character and appearance of the area. Although the National Planning Policy Framework ('the Framework') says that planning decisions should support development that makes efficient use of land, this is subject to, amongst other things taking into

account the desirability of maintaining an area's prevailing character and setting (including residential gardens)¹.

12. For the above reasons, I find conflict with Policies CP1 and CP3 of the Wokingham Borough Local Development Framework - Adopted Core Strategy Development Plan Document, January 2010 (CS) and Policies TB06, CC03 and TB21 of the Managing Development Delivery Local Plan 2014. The collective design aims of these include maintaining or enhancing the high quality of the environment by ensuring that new developments are appropriate and integrate with their surroundings in terms of layout, form and landscaping. Along with safeguarding against the inappropriate development of residential gardens where this would cause harm to the local area.

Affordable housing

13. In line with Policy CP5 of the CS, the threshold for seeking affordable housing is either five dwellings (net) or where it is located within a site of 0.16 hectares or more. As the site exceeds these thresholds, there is a requirement for the provision of affordable housing. As per the Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document and to ensure that affordable housing is delivered from the site, the Council is willing to accept a payment in-lieu of the on-site affordable housing provision.
14. Based on the proposed scheme a commuted sum payment of £246,000 index linked is required. The appellant's UU includes an obligation for this requirement. The obligation would also comply with Paragraphs 54 and 56 of the Framework and meets the statutory tests contained in Regulation 122 of the Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2012. The proposal therefore makes provision for affordable housing in accordance with Policy CP5 of the CS.

Loss of a non-designated heritage asset

15. Based on a range of evidence, the Council has identified the appeal property including the land associated with it as a non-designated heritage asset, as one of the last remaining examples of an 18th Century property in the area.
16. During the appeal the appellant provided an assessment of the significance of the non-designated heritage asset. The level of information submitted, on balance, is proportionate to the asset's importance. The dwelling has been altered and extended. Nonetheless, it is still a good example of an earlier building in the area. As such, and in accordance with the Framework and Planning Practice Guidance, it has a degree of significance meriting consideration in this decision.
17. The Framework states that local planning authorities should recognise assets are an irreplaceable resource and conserve them in a manner appropriate to their significance. A balanced judgement is required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.
18. The proposal would result in the loss of all attributes forming the significance of the heritage asset. The redevelopment of the site would have an unacceptably harmful effect upon the character and appearance of the area, this weighs against the loss of the heritage asset. However, as a non-designated heritage asset of local interest it is of low significance, and because the architectural authenticity of

¹ Paragraph 122

the property has been compromised along with its historical value, it is therefore of limited significance.

19. On the other side of the balance, although there is no current shortfall in housing supply, the proposal would deliver 5 additional dwellings which would contribute to increasing this. Of more beneficial weight would be the appeal scheme's delivery of a financial contribution towards affordable housing, given the shortage in the area for this type of housing. These would be social benefits of the scheme.
20. Economically, the development would generate employment during the construction period, and the spending of the new households would generate economic activity. The new dwellings would be energy efficient and in a sustainable location. Redevelopment of the site would therefore bring some positive environmental benefits.
21. Given the modest scale of the proposed scheme (5 additional dwellings), I assign moderate weight to the benefits described above. These benefits however would be substantial enough to outweigh the limited harm that would be caused by the loss of the non-designated heritage asset. Furthermore, any retained significance of the heritage asset could be recorded. In light of this the proposal would not be contrary to the Framework in respect of protecting non-designated heritage assets.

Other Matters

22. The main parties have referred to a previously dismissed appeal for development at the site². That scheme is different to the current proposal and does not alter my findings on the appeal before me, which I have determined on its merits.

Planning Balance and Conclusion

23. I have found that the proposal would add to the supply of housing in the area, along with providing a financial contribution towards affordable housing and I attach moderate weight to the benefits associated with these. The loss of the non-designated heritage asset is a neutral factor in the overall balance.
24. On the other hand, the proposed development would have an unacceptably harmful effect upon the character and appearance of the area and therefore conflicts with the development plan, to which I attach significant weight. Therefore, the adverse impact of the development outweighs the benefits and so the proposal would not represent sustainable development.
25. For the above reasons and having regard to all other matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

M Aqbal
INSPECTOR

² T/APP/H0330/A/90/146933/P3