



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 16 September 2019

by Chris Couper BA (Hons) DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 23rd September 2019

Appeal Ref: APP/V3120/W/19/3223387

1 Stonhouse Crescent, Radley, Abingdon OX14 3AG

- 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 Michael Holt against the decision of the Vale of White Horse District Council.
 - The application Ref P18/V2384/FUL, dated 20 September 2018, was refused by notice dated 4 January 2019.
 - The development proposed is the demolition of part of the existing dwelling and the erection of a two storey extension to form a two bedroom dwelling with parking and amenity space.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for the demolition of part of the existing dwelling and the erection of a two storey extension to form a two bedroom dwelling with parking and amenity space at 1 Stonhouse Crescent, Radley, Abingdon OX14 3AG, in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref P18/V2384/FUL, dated 20 September 2018, the submitted drawings, and subject to the following condition:
 - 1) The existing hedging along the northern boundary of the site shall be retained and maintained at a height of not less than 1.5 metres. Any hedgerow shrub or tree which is removed or dies within 5 years of the completion of the development shall be replaced during the next planting season by a shrub/tree of a species and size which shall first have been agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Background

2. Planning permission has already been granted for the demolition of part of the existing dwelling at 1 Stonhouse Crescent ('No 1') and the erection of a two storey extension to form a two bedroom dwelling with parking and amenity space (Ref: P18/V0943/FUL) ('approved scheme'). I observed on my visit that the demolition has occurred, and that, in its place, a new dwelling ('No 1A') was nearing completion.
3. The size and proportions of the building in the proposal before me are similar to the approved scheme, although some of the detailing, as summarised at paragraph 2.2 of the Council's delegated report, differs. I observed that the built development as carried out accords with the scheme before me rather than the approved scheme.
4. A timber fence has also been erected along the site's rear boundary to delineate the gardens of No 1 and No 1A from the land beyond, as shown on

drawing no. 1812 p100C. As those rear gardens are significantly shorter compared to the approved scheme, the Council considers that this has harmed the character and appearance of the area.

5. I have therefore dealt with this scheme as the retention of the existing development, and have framed the main issue having regard to this background.

Main Issue

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

Reasons

Character and appearance

7. The form and appearance of the dwellings in the area is varied, particularly along Foxborough Road. Additionally, whilst the dwellings there are typically set back behind landscaped front gardens, the plot sizes are fairly diverse. The dwellings to the west of this site, for instance, have short rear gardens. Although some of the dwellings in Stonhouse Crescent have been altered or extended, they generally have a more consistent design. Those in the short stretch along its western side mostly have long rear gardens.
8. Section 5.10 of the Vale of White Horse Design Guide SPD 2015 ('SPD') sets out that private open space should be provided appropriate to the location of the development and to the size of the dwelling.
9. In the streetscene, the long rear gardens in the short stretch of dwellings on this side of Stonhouse Crescent can only be glimpsed through the narrow gaps between the buildings. Although they are more visible from Foxborough Road, in the context of this area's diverse grain and varied plot sizes, long rear gardens are not a prevailing, or locally distinctive, characteristic.
10. Consequently, whilst the gardens at Nos 1 and 1A are much shorter than those along Stonhouse Crescent to the south, and much shorter than originally permitted, they would not appear 'intrusive' or out of place. Although concerns have been expressed regarding possible future development on the land to the west of the appeal site, I have no proposal before me for that land.
11. In general terms, and amongst other things, Policy CP37 of the Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031 requires development to be of a high quality design, which responds positively to its surroundings and reinforces local identity. For the above reasons, the scheme would not conflict with that policy, nor with the SPD, or with the broadly similar stance in the National Planning Policy Framework ('Framework') particularly at paragraphs 127 and 130.

Other matters

12. Whilst the site is located next to a road junction, the proposed access points would be set back from it, and would emerge onto Stonhouse Crescent, which appears to carry a fairly limited amount of traffic. As this is an accessible location close to bus stops, and within a larger village with a range of services, the level of on-site parking would be sufficient. Given that context, the modest vehicular movements that would typically be generated by this small scheme does not give rise to significant pedestrian, or vehicular safety, concerns.

Conditions and Conclusion

13. Turning to the matter of conditions, I have considered those suggested by the Council and other parties against the Framework's tests. However, as I have dealt with this appeal as the retention of the existing development, neither the suggested standard time limit for commencement, nor a condition requiring that the development be carried out in accordance with the approved plans, are necessary, or indeed appropriate.
14. The extension has been faced with materials which respect those on the host property and elsewhere in Stonhouse Crescent. Consequently, the Council's suggested condition requiring the submission and approval of external facing materials prior to the commencement of the development is unnecessary.
15. A condition was imposed in the approved scheme requiring the retention of the hedgerow along the site's Foxborough Road boundary. In the interests of the character and appearance of the area, I agree that it is necessary.
16. The Local Highway Authority ('LHA') has also suggested matters that could be addressed by conditions – although I have not been provided with their precise wording. Whilst it suggests that the vehicular access on Foxborough Road should be closed, it also maintains that it is unauthorised, and I note that it does not fall within the site boundary. That condition is therefore unnecessary and not directly related to the development before me.
17. The car parking for the dwellings is already in place, and has a gravel finish, in accordance with drawing no. 1812 p100C. A two bedroom dwelling would typically generate few vehicular movements, and Stonhouse Crescent, onto which the accesses emerge, appears to carry limited traffic. I have little cogent evidence that without the LHA's suggested conditions prohibiting loose materials and requiring visibility splays, the scheme would pose a significant highway safety risk. I have not therefore imposed those conditions.
18. For the above reasons, I conclude that the scheme has not harmed the character and appearance of the area. Consequently, having regard to all other matters raised, including representations by interested parties, the appeal is allowed.

Chris Couper

INSPECTOR