



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 2 October 2019

by S Thomas BSc (hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 25 October 2019

Appeal Ref: APP/Q3115/D/19/3233530
60 High Street, Thame, OX9 3AH

- 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 William Blyth against the decision of South Oxfordshire District Council.
 - The application Ref P19/S0611/HH, dated 24 February 2019, was refused by notice dated 29 April 2019.
 - The development proposed is formation of dropped kerb and removal of wall to create parking space.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matter

2. I have used the description of development from the Council's decision notice. I consider this adequately and simply describes the aspects of the development more clearly than the much longer and detailed description given on the application form.

Main Issues

3. The main issues are (i) whether the proposed development would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Thame Conservation Area and (ii) the effect of the proposed development on highway and pedestrian safety.

Reasons

Thame Conservation Area

4. The appeal property is a semi-detached property located on High Street within the town of Thame. It is located within the Thame Conservation area (CA). The general character of the area surrounding the appeal site is defined with the historic properties fronting the pavement without a front garden with the modern properties set back generally enclosed with front boundaries.
5. The Thame Conservation Area Character Appraisal (2006) (CACA) identifies that the historic core of Thame has developed over many centuries and is defined by its historic buildings and layout of streets. The CACA identifies that within the High Street Lower (Western Area), which the appeal property is located, the dominant character is of historic buildings built onto the pavement with no front gardens.

6. The proposal would result in the loss of the front boundary wall in order to create the parking space. Given that the defining character of this area which contributes to the significance of the CA is the historic properties abutting the pavement, the front boundary enclosures along this road of the modern properties do provide a defined frontage which respects the positioning of the historic buildings in the street scene. The removal of the boundary wall would disrupt this pattern.
7. Whilst I acknowledge the wall itself is not of historical value it contributes to the CA by providing a continuous frontage along the road which respects the boundary treatments and mitigates the impact of the modern development on the historic settlement form. I therefore conclude that the loss of this wall would disrupt the street frontage and would harm the Conservation Area. The provision of a parking space is a private benefit and I do not find that there are any public benefits which outweigh the less than substantial harm the proposal has on the character or appearance of the CA.
8. Therefore, for the reasons outlined above I conclude that the proposal would fail to preserve the character or appearance of the CA and would cause less than substantial harm to its significance as a designated heritage asset. In the absence of any public benefits to outweigh the harm it would be in conflict with Policy CSEN3 of the South Oxfordshire Core Strategy (2012) and Policy CON7 of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan (2011) which seek amongst other matters, development to conserve designated heritage assets and not result in harm to the character or appearance of a conservation area. It would also fail to accord with the provisions of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework), which requires great weight to be given to an assets conservation.

Highway and Pedestrian Safety

9. I now turn to the effect of the proposed development on Highway and Pedestrian safety. As I observed on my site visit the property is located on a busy street in the centre of Thame with double yellow lines on both sides of the road which restricts the ability for on street parking. It is evident that a number of properties on this side of the road have off road parking. However, they benefit from larger plots with space to both the front and side of the property which would allow for manoeuvring. This is the case for 61 High Street which is next to the appeal site.
10. The appeal site is a narrower plot with only space to the front, and as such it would only allow for a parallel parking proposal. Whilst a parallel parking manoeuvre is a common procedure the restricted nature of the plot would in my view result in difficulty accessing the space. This would not be an easily accessible parking space and would require significant manoeuvring when attempting to access the space. I noted there was a regular flow of traffic and given it is in the centre of Thame the pavements are likely to be frequently used by pedestrians. This excessive manoeuvring within the highway on a busy street would impact on both pedestrian safety and road users.
11. For the reasons outlined above I conclude that the proposed development would cause unacceptable harm to highway and pedestrian safety. The proposal would therefore conflict with Policies T1 and T2 of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011 which seek amongst other matters development to provide a safe and convenient access to the highway network and adequate

turning space. It would also fail to accord with the Framework which seeks that safe and suitable access to a site can be achieved.

12. I acknowledge the appellant's desire to create off street parking and it was clear from my site visit that there is a pressure on parking spaces in this area and therefore this would free up sought after parking space within the town. I also acknowledge that a parking space at the front of the house would allow an electric car to be charged and the benefits the move to electric cars has for the environment. However, these considerations would not outweigh the harm I have found to highway and pedestrian safety.

Conclusion

13. For the above reasons, the appeal is dismissed.

Stephen Thomas

INSPECTOR