



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: 07 January 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/Q3115/W/19/3232756

Oakridge, Nuffield Lane, Benson, Wallingford OX10 6QQ

- 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 Twine against the decision of South Oxfordshire District Council.
 - The application Ref P19/S0702/FUL, dated 27 February 2019, was refused by notice dated 16 May 2019.
 - The development proposed is conversion of outbuilding to dwelling with associated parking and landscaping.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is whether the site is a suitable location for new housing having regard to the development plan.

Reasons

3. The appeal site is located within the grounds of the existing property Oakridge. It is accessed off Nuffield Lane, a country lane which is located off the main A4130 distributor road. It is adjacent to another property, but the area is of rural character with a sporadic settlement pattern, containing individual and pockets of dwellings and other rural development surrounded by open countryside. To the south west of the site there is an area of mixed-use development comprising equine uses, commercial buildings and scattered dwellings.
4. The site is located a considerable distance away from the built up limits of any town or village. Policy CSS1 of the South Oxfordshire Core Strategy (2012) (Core Strategy) identifies that development proposals should be consistent with the overall spatial strategy to support larger villages and other villages. The supporting text identifies that the aim of the strategy is to encourage villages to be more socially and economically sustainable. It says that any change outside of the towns and villages has to relate to the specific needs of the agricultural industry or enhancement of the environment. The proposed conversion of the outbuilding would result in the creation of a new dwelling in the countryside and would not relate to the specific needs of the agricultural industry. On this basis, the proposal would not meet the requirements for

developments outside towns and villages and would therefore cause harm as it would be in conflict with the development strategy.

5. Policy CSR1 of the Core Strategy states that housing in villages will be permitted where it contributes to the sustainability of villages. Whilst opportunities for small housing such as infill is supported within the villages, this site lies in the open countryside where housing is generally restricted. The closest village to the site is Crowmarsh Gifford. I acknowledge that whilst it lies away from the village and the town of Wallingford occupiers could travel to services and facilities and thus support them. I also acknowledge that there is a bus stop within a reasonable walk along the A4130. However, this would require walking down the unlit country lane with no footways in order to access it. Given its location occupiers of the properties would be largely reliant on use of the private car. Whilst the policy identifies redevelopment opportunities in all categories of settlement may be acceptable, I do not find this is a suitable location for additional housing in line with this policy and other policies of the development plan thus the proposal is contrary to it.
6. Taking the above matters into consideration, the conversion of the outbuilding would create a new dwelling in a location away from any settlement containing day-to-day services and facilities. Consequently, its occupants would be heavily reliant on use of private motorised transport in light of the absence of easily accessible sustainable alternatives. Although journeys would be likely to be of short duration and infrequent it wouldn't accord with the need to promote sustainable travel.
7. I have considered the provisions of saved Policy E8 of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan (2011) in respect of the re use of rural buildings. This proposal is an outbuilding containing a double garage associated with the residential use of the existing dwelling currently being used for storage. I do not consider this constitutes a rural building in the context of this policy and consequently is not relevant to the determination of this appeal. In respect of the recent planning decision at Blenheim Farm, the full details of this case are not available to me to consider its relevance and accordingly I give it limited weight in my decision. Notwithstanding this, I have considered this case on its own merits based on the evidence before me.
8. The proposal would provide a social benefit of an additional dwelling and some economic benefits to the local economy through the completion of the residential conversion, however these are minor benefits commensurate with the provision of only one dwelling. In environmental terms the proposal would involve the conversion of an existing outbuilding rather than the creation of a new building. However, whilst there are public transport stops on the A4130 road which are reasonably located to the site, it would result in a new dwelling in a location away from a settlement not served by day to day facilities. Future occupants would therefore have to travel to access these, likely increasing dependency on the private car. Consequently, this would not be a sustainable form of development in line with the Core Strategy. I therefore find no overriding reasons which would outweigh the conflict with the development plan. In this regard the proposal would not constitute sustainable development in line with the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework).

9. For the reasons outlined above I conclude that the proposal would not be a suitable location for new housing and would be contrary to Policy CSS1 and CSR1 of the Core Strategy and the Framework.

Other matter

10. The site lies within the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Given that the proposal seeks to convert an existing building in an area where there are also other buildings, parked cars and domestic paraphernalia, it would not result in an unacceptable effect on this designated landscape.

Conclusion

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

Stephen Thomas

INSPECTOR