



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 7 January 2020

by Adrian Hunter BA(Hons) BTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 6th February 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/V3120/W/19/3238834

Arborfield, Didcot Road, Harwell, Didcot OX11 6DH

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant outline planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mr P Simons against the decision of Vale of White Horse District Council.
 - The application Ref P18/V1017/O, dated 20 April 2018, was refused by notice dated 21 June 2019.
 - The development proposed is for the demolition of existing dwelling and outbuilding, and construction of 3 No. detached dwellings with associated external works.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The planning application is submitted in outline with all detailed matters reserved for a subsequent reserved matters application. An indicative layout (drawing No 6613:17:1 Revision D) accompanies the outline planning application. I have taken this into account in so far as establishing whether or not it would be possible, in principle, to erect three detached dwellings on the site.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is:
 - the effect of the proposed development upon the character and appearance of the area, including the likely long-term effect on protected trees.

Reasons

Character and appearance

4. The surrounding area is predominately residential, with a mix of dwelling types and sizes. The appeal site comprises a single, detached property, with a long, but relatively thin rear garden containing a large outbuilding. The character of the immediate area is defined by detached properties, with long back gardens. These properties, including the appeal site, form part of the original pattern of development of the settlement, but have now been surrounded by newly built housing estates. The new developments take the form of well-planned and laid out estates. In contrast, the older developments, including the appeal site, comprise a variety of house types and sizes, which, over the years have been extended and altered. They do however, follow an established building line,

which defines the frontage of the dwellings. Car parking and vehicle turning is provided to the front. Within the plots are a number of mature trees and established landscaping, which is in contrast to the newly built estates, where there is very little tree cover, and landscaping has only recently been established and is therefore relatively sparse by comparison.

5. The appeal proposal would involve the demolition of the existing house and outbuilding, with the illustrative plan showing its replacement with 3 detached dwellings, one behind the other, evenly spaced out along the plot. Access to Plot 1 would be via the front, with a new vehicle access, down the side of this plot, giving access to the proposed properties at the rear. To provide the necessary space for the development a number of existing trees are proposed to be removed, along with work to others.
6. The illustrative plans show two dwellings in the rear garden laid out in a tandem layout, with Plot 2 being a similar size to Plot 1. Towards the rear of the site, Plot 3 is shown to be slightly larger and to fill the plot width. During my site visit, I noted that new development has taken place in the rear gardens to the east of the appeal site. However, the layout of these properties differs from the appeal proposal, in that only a single dwelling has been erected to the rear of each of the original dwellings on the plots. The new housing developments that have recently been completed to the south and west of the site, whilst generally being of a higher density, still reflect the traditional, suburban character of the area, with spaces and gaps between them. The appeal proposal on the other hand, would result in the erection of three dwellings on what is a single plot. Consequently, there would be less generous spacing between each dwelling. This would result in a cramped appearance, indicative of overdevelopment. As a result, the proposal would introduce a pattern of development which would be out of keeping and harmful to the character and appearance of the area. Given the constraints of the site, this could not be overcome with an alternative layout of development.
7. The illustrative plan shows that to accommodate the development some existing trees would be lost. Work would also be undertaken to a number of the remaining trees. Despite being in the rear garden of the appeal property, the larger mature trees are clearly visible and are important features within the street scene. Their presence therefore makes an important contribution to the character of the area.
8. Of those trees to be retained, development principally in the form of car parking, is located within close proximity to them. Whilst modern methods of construction could provide a solution to enable development to take place, as these trees mature, their relationship with the proposed development is likely to place pressure on the future safeguarding of these trees. From the illustrative drawings and other information, I therefore conclude 3 detached dwellings cannot be easily accommodated on the site without having an adverse effect upon the existing trees.
9. I have therefore concluded that the proposed development is harmful to the character and appearance of the area and, in this respect, is contrary to Policies CP37 (Design and Local Distinctiveness) and CP44 (Landscape) of the Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031, Part One.

Other Matters

10. I have been referred to the positive response to the submitted pre-application enquiry. Whilst I appreciate that the pre-application advice differs from the decision on the appeal application, pre application advice is offered without prejudice to the formal decision on any subsequent planning application. Accordingly, issues relating to the pre-application advice have not had any material bearing on my assessment of the planning issues in this appeal.

Conclusion

11. I conclude, for the reasons outlined above, that the appeal should be dismissed.

Adrian Hunter

INSPECTOR