
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 18 December 2019

by Nick Davies BSc(Hons) BTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 06 February 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/V3310/W/19/3237562

33A High Street, Ashcott, Bridgwater TA7 9PZ

- 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 J Hopkins against the decision of Sedgemoor District Council.
 - The application Ref 01/19/00001/ACN, dated 1 February 2019, was refused by notice dated 24 July 2019.
 - The development proposed is erection of new dwelling.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for erection of new dwelling at 33A High Street, Ashcott, Bridgwater TA7 9PZ in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref 01/19/00001/ACN, dated 1 February 2019, and the plans submitted with it, subject to the following conditions:
 - 1) The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than 3 years from the date of this decision.
 - 2) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: 034/100; 034/100A.
 - 3) Development shall not proceed above damp-proof course level until details / samples of the materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of the dwelling hereby permitted have been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. Development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details / samples.
 - 4) The dwelling shall not be occupied until the two car-parking spaces shown on drawing no. 034/100A have been drained and surfaced in accordance with details that shall first have been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority, and that area shall thereafter be kept available at all times for the parking of vehicles.

Main Issues

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

Reasons

3. The appeal site lies in the centre of Ashcott, where Policy T3a of the Sedgemoor Local Plan 2011 – 2032 (adopted 2019) (the Local Plan) supports housing proposals that are appropriate to the scale, design and existing character of the settlement, and do not involve the loss of important spaces.

Much of the village is comprised of relatively recent, low-density housing development, with small blocks of buildings set back from the roads behind front gardens, resulting in a spacious character. High Street, however, has a more intimate character, made up of traditional buildings, often in terraces, located close to the road. There are some green gaps in the frontages, but the overall character is that of a close-knit village street.

4. 31–37 High Street are two terraces of traditionally designed, two-storey houses, with small front gardens. They therefore contribute to the cohesive character of High Street. There is a gap between the two blocks, which is made up of the side garden to No 33a (the appeal site) and a sloping walkway that gives access to the residential development to the rear. The proposed house would be attached to No 33a, and it would be of similar design and materials. The house would extend along the same line as the front and rear walls of the existing terrace, and would have the same eaves and ridge height. It would therefore appear as a continuation of the terrace.
5. The proposal would reduce the gap between the two terraces. However, although the side garden contains some trees and shrubs, it does not make a particularly positive contribution to the character of the High Street. Whilst it allows views through the site, these are to the garages and bungalows at the rear, which are not a typical component of the High Street character. The reduced width of the gap would not, therefore, be harmful to the street scene. In any event, there would still be a gap, which would be wide enough that the buildings would continue to be perceived as two separate terraces.
6. The severance of the side garden would leave the existing house with a front and rear garden of similar dimensions to the other houses in the terrace. The proposed dwelling would also have a front garden of a similar size to the others in the row. Its rear garden would be narrower, but this would not be readily apparent from public viewpoints. The rear corner of the house would be close to the site boundary, but this would only be apparent from limited viewpoints. As the end-terraced property on the opposite side of the walkway is also close to its side boundary, the lack of a side garden for the proposed dwelling would not result in an uncharacteristically cramped appearance. The proposed dwelling would therefore sit comfortably alongside the similarly sized terraced houses to either side.
7. Paragraph 68 of the National Planning Policy Framework advises that great weight should be given to the benefits of using suitable sites within existing settlements for homes. The proposed house would be responsive to its context in scale, design and character. I therefore conclude that the development would not harm the distinctive character and appearance of this part of the settlement. The proposal would therefore accord with Policies T3a and D2 of the Local Plan, which support housing developments that maintain the existing character of their surroundings, through design that reinforces local context and distinctiveness.

Conditions

8. In accordance with the legislation, I have imposed a condition limiting the period within which the development must commence. I have also included a condition specifying the relevant plans, as this provides certainty. The council has suggested conditions to cover external materials and the provision of car-parking. To ensure that the dwelling assimilates comfortably into its

surroundings, I agree that details of external materials should be submitted for approval. The approved drawings indicate the provision of two car-parking spaces, but I agree that it is necessary to impose a condition, to ensure their provision prior to the occupation of the house.

Conclusion

9. For the reasons given above, I conclude that the appeal should be allowed.

Nick Davies

INSPECTOR