
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 18 March 2020

by James Taylor BA (Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 25 March 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/Q3115/W/19/3243524

Milton House, Station Yard, Thame OX9 3UH

- 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 S Finklestein (Goldspark [Thame] Ltd.) against the decision of South Oxfordshire District Council.
 - The application Ref P18/S3162/FUL, dated 14 September 2018, was refused by notice dated 11 November 2019.
 - The development proposed is described as the 'erection of a second floor roof extension to the building, providing a further two flats (Amendments to the application received 1st August 2019, reducing the size of the proposed extension, adding the previously approved first floor balcony and demarcating the parking spaces)'.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Application for costs

2. An application for costs was made by Mr S Finklestein (Goldspark [Thame] Ltd.) against South Oxfordshire District Council. This application is the subject of a separate Decision.

Procedural matter

3. During the course of the planning application the proposal was subject to amendments. Therefore, I have taken the description of development from the appellant's appeal form which more accurately reflects the proposal that was refused planning permission.

Main issue

4. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the surrounding area.

Reasons

5. Milton House is a former commercial building that has been converted to a number of residential apartments. The host building, due to its width and depth appears as a solid mass, sited prominently, adjacent to the highway. The buildings mass and siting are mitigated by its two-storey height and it being at a lower level compared to the adjacent road. It is located on the fringes of a commercial area and adjacent to other residential uses. Therefore, the area is mixed in character. Furthermore, the buildings range in design and form.

However, two-storey dwellings are typical of the area rather than flatted development and/or buildings of more than two storeys.

6. The proposal would increase the height of the building, adding an additional storey at the front in the most prominent position within the street scene. From views on Thame Park Road the proposal would extend the full width of the building. The depth of the extension would also extend by a similar amount. The additional height, width and depth of the extension would significantly add to the bulk and mass of the built form. It would increase the prominence of the building and be out of keeping with the scale and mass of development within the surrounding area.
7. Furthermore, the proposal would introduce a rendered band around the additional floor of the building with six dormer windows to the front elevation. Given the mix and range of materials in the local area, the use of render would not cause any significant harm. However, there is no context in the local area to support the extensive use of dormer windows on such a prominent elevation. The six dormer windows would appear cluttered, draw attention to the upper storey and create a vertical emphasis to the building. As such, the proposed design, including a large number of prominent dormer windows would contribute to the incongruous scale and mass of the proposal.
8. Both parties have referred to the South Oxfordshire Design Guide (Design Guide) in their evidence. It is not part of the development plan however; I afford this some weight. The guidance is underpinned by the need for a contextual analysis whether it is within a designated area, such as a conservation area, or as is the case here, not. The context does not support the provision of three-storey development of the proposed scale, design and massing in such a prominent location. The appellant has highlighted that a four-storey flatted development exists in the local area and provides context. However, I have observed that this is a purpose-built development, some distance from the appeal site within a new and different character area. As such, I afford this very limited weight.
9. Therefore, in conclusion on the main issue the proposal would have a harmful effect on the character and appearance of the surrounding area. As such, the proposal would be contrary to Policy CSQ3 of the South Oxfordshire Core Strategy, December 2012; Policies D1, G2 and H4 of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011, Adopted January 2006, Strike-through version on adoption of South Oxfordshire Core Strategy December 2012 (LP); Policies ESDQ16, ESDQ17, and ESDQ26 of the Thame Neighbourhood Plan (NP) and sections 1, 7 and 8 within part 2 of the Design Guide. Furthermore, the proposal would be contrary to paragraphs 118, 127 and 130 of the National Planning Policy Framework. These policies, and the guidance seek, amongst other aims to ensure that new developments are of a high-quality design that respects the character and appearance of an area and its local distinctiveness.
10. Policy D3 of the LP seeks to ensure adequate outside space is provided for development. Even if this was a concern for the Council, I have no evidence that this would cause any harm, noting that the outside space provision would be the same as the existing flats below them. Furthermore, Policy ESDQ27 of the NP relates to ancillary features, such as bin storage, and requires that they are considered at the start of the design process. Even if this was a concern for

the Council, given the modest number of dwellings proposed, this could be addressed through conditions.

Other matters

11. The proposal would add to the supply of market housing within an accessible location, making a more efficient use of land through a vertical extension. However, the proposal would only contribute very modestly to housing supply and, as such, I afford these matters limited weight. These considerations would not outweigh the identified harm.

Conclusion

12. For the reasons given above, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

James Taylor

INSPECTOR