
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 9 March 2021

by James Taylor BA (Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 24 March 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/X0360/W/20/3261511

2 Radstock Lane, Earley RG6 5QL

- 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 Saqib Aziz Bhatti against the decision of Wokingham Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 201903, dated 30 July 2020, was refused by notice dated 22 September 2020.
 - The development proposed is described as the 'erection of replacement dwelling following the demolition of the existing building'.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural matter

2. I note that the name of the appellant differs on the application form and the appeal form. The appellant has explained that the application form was completed erroneously with their middle name rather than surname. For the avoidance of doubt, I have utilised their full name in this Appeal Decision.

Main Issue

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

Reasons

4. Policy CP1 of the Wokingham Borough Local Development Framework, Adopted Core Strategy Development Plan Document, January 2010 (the CS) sets out a positive approach to delivering sustainable development through consideration of a number of criteria. These include ensuring that development maintains or enhances the high quality of the environment and is attractive. Furthermore, CP3 sets out general principles for development including that it is of an appropriate mass, layout, built form, height and character to the area together with a high quality of design.
5. Section 12 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) sets out that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development. Furthermore, the Framework details that permission should be refused for development of poor design that fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character

- and quality of an area taking into account any supplementary planning documents.
6. The Council has adopted design guidance within the Wokingham Borough Council, Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document, June 2012 (the SPD). This establishes that new housing should respond to its context including relating well to neighbouring properties. Additionally, that development should contribute positively towards the historic or underlying character and quality of the local area.
 7. The appeal site is occupied by a detached 2-storey dwelling with a single storey, flat-roofed garage to the north side. It has a simple character and appearance with brick materials to the walls and chimneys, and plain tiles to the hipped roof. Whilst the housing to the south along Radstock Lane has been subject to alterations and extensions, a high degree of homogeneity remains in terms of the built form and the spacing to the front and sides. Consequently, there is a strong rhythm to the built form at this point on Radstock Lane which is emphasised by the ridge heights of the houses rising consistently with the topography. These features contribute to an attractive and high-quality environment.
 8. Despite retaining an element of separation to the side boundaries, the proposal would increase the first-floor development, occupying much of the site's width at this level. As such, the spaciousness between the housing would be eroded. Furthermore, the proposal would increase the height of development at ridge level so as to appear similar in height to the housing sited in an elevated position to the north. Despite the hipped form this would further erode the sense of spaciousness and the uniform height increases reflective of the local topography. I find little evidence to indicate that this would provide a more suitable transition to the housing to the north.
 9. Additionally, the proposal would diverge from the simplicity of the frontage designs by introducing a subservient crown roof form to the south side of the proposal and a projecting gable to the front. Cumulatively, the proposals would significantly increase the mass of the built form. Furthermore, the proposal would not reflect the existing fenestration proportions and spacing and would omit the chimneys that are characteristic of this part of Radstock Lane. These are design details that positively contribute to this group of houses. The proposals would significantly erode the regular rhythm of the built form and the spaces between. These are a key feature of the housing along this part of Radstock Lane that positively contributes to the character and appearance of the area. The proposal would not reflect the positive design elements of the street scene and, as such, would not represent high quality design.
 10. The appellant has highlighted an intention to recycle materials from the existing property and utilise matching or similar materials to elsewhere on Radstock Lane and Beech Lane. However, even if this could be secured it would not mitigate the harm I have identified. Whilst the verdant context at this point would mitigate the visual impact to a degree, the appeal site and its context can be clearly appreciated from public views on Radstock Lane and Beech Lane across the turning head outside the appeal site.
 11. The appellant has drawn my attention to a number of examples of developments in the area, most locally, next door at 74 Beech Lane and to the south at no 6. Whilst I have noted some similarities with the proposals before

me, none of the examples are identical in design and/or context. Furthermore, I have been provided with little detail of the circumstances that led to these developments. As such, whilst noting them, and the context they provide, I have proceeded to determine the proposals on their merits.

12. The appellant has highlighted that the proposal has been amended in light of previous refusals of planning permission for householder developments¹. Furthermore, the appellant suggests that the proposal is not much greater than what may be achieved under permitted development. However, I have not been provided with full details of the planning history and little evidence to support any realistic fallback option. Moreover, I note that the proposal is for a replacement dwelling rather than alterations or extensions. As such, I afford these matters little weight.
13. In conclusion on the main issue, the proposal would be harmful to the character and appearance of the area. As such, the proposal would be contrary to Policies CP1 and CP3 of the CS, Section 12 of the Framework and guidance within the SPD.

Other matters

14. The appellant has highlighted that the proposal would make an efficient use of land. However, it would not increase the number of houses, rather it would provide a larger replacement dwelling. Furthermore, the appellant has expressed some frustration with the Council's processing of the application. However, these matters do not outweigh the harm I have found.

Conclusion

15. The proposal would harm the character and appearance of the area and would conflict with the development plan taken as a whole. There are no material considerations that indicate the decision should be made other than in accordance with the development plan. Therefore, for the reasons given, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

James Taylor

INSPECTOR

¹ LPA refs: 200994 and 200995