



Appeal Decision

Site Visit made on 4 August 2020

by S Thomas BSc (Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 24 March 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/P0119/W/20/3249543
5 North Road, Thornbury, BS35 1EA

- 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 Mrs Daxa Everitt against the decision of South Gloucestershire Council.
 - The application Ref P19/8588/O, dated 7 July 2019, was refused by notice dated 24 September 2019.
 - The development proposed is described as demolish existing outbuilding and convert existing 3 bedroom dwelling to create 4 two bedroom dwellings consisting of 2 x new two bedroom semi detached dwellings and convert existing 3 bedroom house to 2 x two bedroom dwellings.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matters

2. The application is made in outline with all matters reserved. However, the appellant has provided an indicative site layout plan (Drawing Number 878-11) which indicates how the site could potentially be developed. This comprises the conversion of the existing dwelling into two dwellings and the construction of a pair of semi-detached dwellings on land to the side of the property currently occupied by an outbuilding. As this is indicative, I note there may be other ways of developing the site. I have dealt with the appeal on this basis.

Main Issues

3. The main issues are the effect of the proposed development on (i) the character and appearance of the area and (ii) highway safety with regard to parking.

Reasons

Character and Appearance

4. The appeal site is located on a large plot along North Road currently occupied by a large semi-detached property. Whilst there is a varied character of dwellings along North Road, the character of dwellings in the immediate vicinity of the appeal site is of large semi-detached dwellings sat in spacious plots with spacing to the side boundaries. This contributes to the characteristic spaciousness along this part of North Road.

5. Whilst the indicative layout would create a pair of semi-detached dwellings, given the width of the site it would result in much narrower dwellings than the surrounding built form and would be out of character with it. It would lead to the built form spanning the width of the site and would fail to replicate the spacious gaps to the boundaries and the spacing between pairs of dwellings. Furthermore, the very close proximity that would be likely between the existing property and new dwellings would be uncharacteristic of the gaps between properties.
6. The combination of these factors would lead to the indicative layout appearing hemmed in and cramped within the plot. Consequently, this form of development would appear incongruous and would fail to integrate well with the surrounding built form appearing at odds with the spacious character of existing plots.
7. I note the indicative site plan provides only one option for developing the site. However, other options for developing the site in an alternative way are not before me. On the basis of the evidence before me and my observations on site I consider it would be difficult for the site to accommodate 4 dwellings without it resulting in a cramped form of development which would disrupt the spacious character and one which would be uncharacteristic of surrounding built form. Accordingly, I conclude the appeal proposal for 4 dwellings on the site would be unacceptable.
8. For the above reasons, the proposed development would cause harm to the character and appearance of the area. It would therefore be in conflict with Policy CS1 of the South Gloucestershire Core Strategy (2013) and Policies PSP1 and PSP38 of the Policies Sites and Places Plan (2017) (PSPP). Amongst other matters these policies seek that development proposals respect and enhance the character and amenity of the site and context, that density is well integrated with existing adjacent development, and proposals respect the form of the street and surrounding area.
9. On this basis the proposal would also be in conflict with Paragraph 127 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) which seeks that developments are sympathetic to local character including the surrounding built environment.

Highway Safety

10. The indicative layout indicates 5 parking spaces to the front of the proposed properties and an area for bin stores. This is below the required standards of 6 spaces for 4 dwellings of this type required under Policy PSP16 of the PSPP. Whilst this would result in a shortfall of 1 space, at the time of my visit there was available on street parking and no parking restrictions along North Road. From my observations there didn't appear to be significant on street parking stress in the immediate vicinity of the site.
11. I have had regard to Paragraph 106 of the Framework which states that maximum parking standards for residential development should only be set where there is clear and compelling justification that they are necessary for managing the local road network. Accordingly, given the above I do not consider a shortfall of one parking space to serve 4 dwellings would result in an unacceptable impact to highway safety with regard to on street parking along North Road.

12. For the reasons above, whilst the proposal would not be in line with the minimum parking standards in PSPP Policy PSP16, the proposal would not result in an unacceptable impact on highway safety with regard to parking. Accordingly, the proposal would not be in conflict with Policy PSP11 of the PSPP and the Framework.

Other Matters

13. Whilst I note the dispute between the parties regarding bin and cycle storage, this is a detailed matter that is not before me in this appeal. The acceptability or not would depend on how 4 dwellings were arranged on the site. In any event, on the basis of the indicative layout the appellant indicates rear access could be made available to serve dwellings via the existing open space to the rear.
14. I note the existence of previous permissions along North Road in the nearby vicinity of the site. In respect of applications 06_3064 and 08_0802, the evidence indicates these were permitted under a superseded development plan and therefore I cannot be certain of the planning circumstances that led to their approval. In any event, I do not consider these examples are directly comparable to the character of the part of North Road subject of this appeal.
15. In respect of application PT17_2465, this is not built and therefore does not form part of the established character of the area. Nevertheless, this appears to form part of more recent development, and by virtue of its corner plot, would have a different appearance in terms of the separation by North East Road to neighbouring dwellings. It would not be directly comparable to the subdivision of the plot to accommodate 4 dwellings and the impact on the character of the area surrounding the appeal site. In any event having viewed these plans and the site, the existence of this permission does not persuade me the appeal proposal would be acceptable.
16. I acknowledge the site is acceptable in terms of location, proximity to local services and public transport and highway safety. However, whilst I note the appellant's reference to identified affordable housing need which they consider the proposal would contribute to, there is no legal agreement before me to secure affordable housing. Therefore, this does not amount to a benefit of the scheme. The site would contribute an additional 3 dwellings to the housing stock. However, any benefits that might be associated with it would be modest and would not outweigh the clearly identified harm that would result to the area's character and appearance.

Conclusion

17. For the reasons above, the appeal does not succeed.

S Thomas

INSPECTOR