

Appeal Decision

Site Visit made on 19 July 2021

by Martin Chandler BSc, MA, MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 31 August 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/X0360/W/21/3269974

30 Grazeley Road, Three Mile Cross, Reading, RG7 1BJ

- 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 Brian Endean against the decision of Wokingham Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 201629, dated 10 July 2020, was refused by notice dated 4 September 2020.
 - The development proposed is Full application for the proposed subdivision of the site and the erection of a 3 no. bedroom dwelling with detached garage.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Applications for costs

2. An application for costs was made by Mr Brian Endean against Wokingham Borough Council. An application for costs was also made by Wokingham Borough Council against Mr Brian Endean. These are the subject of a separate decision.

Preliminary Matter

3. Following the submission of the appeal, a revised National Planning Policy Framework was published. The parties have been consulted in relation to this publication and any comments received have been factored into my assessment of the appeal.

Main Issues

4. The main issues are:
 - i) the effect of the proposal on the living conditions for the occupants of neighbouring dwellings, having particular regard to privacy and outlook;
 - ii) the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area; and
 - iii) the effect of the proposal on blue light services and the emergency off-site plan for the Atomic Weapons Establishment site at Burghfield.

Reasons

Living conditions

5. The proposal would introduce a large two storey dwelling to the rear of the existing dwelling. Accordingly, it would be located within what is currently utilised as a private garden. Although the western boundary of the site fronts onto Wallace Grove, to the east is the garden that serves No 28 Grazeley Road.
6. The gardens are long and therefore, the proposed dwelling would be well separated from both the neighbouring house and the existing dwelling. However, the width of the appeal site is not as substantial. Accordingly, due to the depth of the proposed dwelling, the footprint would occupy much of the width of the site. Consequently, the proposal would introduce two storeys of accommodation with a pitched roof above, close to the shared boundary. The dwelling would also be a wide property that would present its widest elevation to the shared boundary. The width and height of the proposed dwelling would have the effect of presenting a large and imposing building close to the neighbouring garden. Due to this proximity, the proposed house would overwhelm the adjacent garden. It would have an overbearing and oppressive effect on the neighbouring space to the extent that it would be demonstrably harmful to outlook, despite the distance from the dwelling itself.
7. In addition, the proposal would introduce a rear facing bedroom window close to the shared boundary. I note that the proposal would seek to introduce tall planting but there can be no guarantee that this would fully establish, and if it were to fail, the degree of overlooking that would be enabled by the location of the first floor window would cause a harmful loss of privacy to the neighbouring dwelling. To require the retention of landscaping by way of condition could place an unreasonable burden on the appellant due to risk of failure. Accordingly, in my judgement, such a condition would fail to comply with the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework.
8. For the reasons identified above therefore, I conclude that the proposal would harm the living conditions for the occupants of the neighbouring dwelling. It would therefore fail to comply with Policies CP1 and CP3 of the Wokingham Borough Local Development Framework, Adopted Core Strategy Development Plan Document (2010) (CS), Policy 2 of the Shinfield Neighbourhood Plan (2017) (NP), and guidance contained within the Borough Design Guide, Supplementary Planning Document (2012) (SPD). Taken together, these seek amongst other things, sustainable development without detriment to the privacy and amenity of new and existing residential properties.

Atomic Weapons Establishment

9. Due to an amendment to the relevant zone, the appeal site is now located within the Detailed Emergency Planning Zone (DEPZ) for the Atomic Weapons Establishment (AWE) site at Burghfield. Accordingly, all residential development is required to demonstrate that it can be safely accommodated having regard to the needs of 'blue light' services and the emergency off-site plan for the AWE.
10. I note the comments from the appellant that the site is accessible for relevant services and that due to the scale of the proposal, the effect on the off-site plan would be limited. I also agree with the appellant that the Policy is not

clear regarding how concerns can be mitigated, and on this point, the absence of a consultation response from the relevant authority does not help the appellant. However, the matter brings with it serious consequences if the proposal, in association with other development, has the potential to overwhelm the blue light services and limit the effectiveness of the off-site plan for the AWE, and on this basis, I note the comments from the Office for Nuclear Regulation. I also note the Council's reference to a recent appeal decision and High Court judgement regarding the DEPZ and its effect on additional housing.

11. Accordingly, I conclude that the proposal has the potential to have a harmful effect on the blue light services, as well as the off-site plan for the AWE. Consequently, the proposal would fail to comply with Policy TB04 of the Wokingham Borough Development Plan, Adopted Managing Development Delivery Local Plan (2014) (MDD) which relates to development in the vicinity of the AWE.

Character and Appearance

12. The existing building on the appeal site is a bungalow which fronts onto the main road. In contrast, the proposal would introduce a substantial two storey dwelling to the rear of the site. Despite this, beyond the appeal site to the rear, there are a collection of new dwellings that are two storey in scale. Due to the location of the proposal, the new building would be experienced in the context of these larger properties. The proposal would also benefit from a road frontage. Accordingly, I find that the tandem nature of the proposal would not cause harm because the dwelling would have its own presence fronting on to a highway.
13. Due to the length of the appeal site, the proposal would also be substantially removed from the existing bungalow. Indeed, the proposal would be physically and visually closer to the neighbouring two storey dwellings rather than the existing building. Accordingly, I am satisfied that the proposal would not appear cramped on the site when viewed from the road. It would also not establish an awkward relationship with the existing building. Instead, it would integrate successfully with the neighbouring development.
14. Consequently, I conclude that the proposal would not harm the character and appearance of the surrounding area. It would therefore comply with Policy TB06 of the MDD, Policies CP1 and CP3 of the CS, and Policy 2 of the NP, as well as guidance contained within the SPD. Taken together, these seek amongst other things, sustainable development which is of an appropriate character to the area.

Conclusion

15. Although I have found that the proposal would not harm the character and appearance of the surrounding area, this does not outweigh my findings in relation to the living conditions of neighbouring properties, and regarding the AWE.
16. Consequently, the appeal should be dismissed.

Martin Chandler

INSPECTOR