



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 21 February 2022

by P D Sedgwick BSc (Hons) DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 18th March 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/K0425/W/21/3279950

113 West Wycombe Road, High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire, HP12 3AB

- 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 Bobby John - Consulting For You Europe Ltd against the decision of Buckinghamshire Council.
 - The application Ref 20/06848/FUL, dated 17 July 2020, was refused by notice dated 4 February 2021.
 - The development proposed is Conversion of a single dwelling house into 3 self-contained flats: 2x 1bedroom 1person flat and 1x 1bedroom 1person studio flat Double-storey rear extension.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development upon highway safety.

Reasons

3. The appeal site relates to one of a pair of semi-detached properties in a residential section of the A40 on West Wycombe Road. Properties on the appeal site side of the road generally have front gardens behind low front boundary walls set behind the pavement. Gaps between several pairs of semi-detached properties provide access to land to their rear, which is used for parking. There is a gap between the property adjoining the appeal site, No 111, and a neighbouring house, No 109A. This provides access to a yard area to the rear currently used for parking and bin storage for the appeal site and adjoining neighbour. Unlike most properties on the appeal site side of the road, No 109A and neighbouring buildings up to the nearby junction with Oakridge Road sit flush with the pavement edge and have no front gardens. Consequently, it sits slightly forward of No 111.
4. The proposal is to convert the building into three, 1 bedroom, flats. There is already planning permission for a 1 bedroom flat and a 2 bedroom flat. Parking would be provided to the rear of, and shared with, No 111. The access to the rear parking would cross the pavement and run between No 111 and No 109A. No 111 has already been converted into three, one bedroom, flats.
5. The Council is concerned that the access is narrow with poor visibility, and that an additional flat would increase vehicle movements using it to an extent that would harm highway safety. According to the appellant, the Council raised no

highway safety concerns in relation to an approved planning application to convert the property into a 1 bedroom and a 2 bedroom flat and as there would be no difference in bedroom numbers the proposal should be acceptable.

6. The Council has provided data from the Trip Rate Computer Information System (TRICS) which estimates car trips associated with different types of development. I have rounded up the figures which indicate that a house would generate 3.7 trips, 2 flats as currently permitted would generate 5 trips, and 3 flats as proposed would generate 7.5 car trips per day. Therefore, the Council's approach in considering that an additional flat would create another household, and therefore more car journeys, seems reasonable, particularly as those sharing a flat would be more likely to share trips.
7. The proposed development in combination with No 111, which also comprises 3 flats, would generate 15 car trips per day according to the TRICS data. This would be double that which would be expected of a pair of semi-detached houses.
8. The A40 is a busy road and relatively narrow close to the appeal site, hence there are double yellow lines preventing on street parking on the opposite side of the road. The appeal site access has no visibility splay and the position of No 109A prevents views of oncoming pedestrian and vehicular traffic from the right when exiting the site. This necessitates pulling out onto the footway to see approaching vehicles. On street parking is allowed close to the access on the left when exiting the site. Most parking spaces were in use at the time of my visit and restricted views of traffic approaching on the opposite side of the road. Consequently, it is necessary to pull out into the road to view approaching traffic when turning right, thus potentially blocking traffic approaching from the right.
9. The access is narrow and further restricted by a metal staircase on the side elevation of No 111. As a result, only one car can exit or enter the site at a time, and it is difficult for vehicles to reverse back to allow vehicles to enter where there is conflict between incoming and outgoing traffic. I therefore agree with the Council that the access is poor. I appreciate that the proposed development would only add a small amount of daily additional trips compared to the development already permitted, but it would be double that which would be expected if the pair of buildings had remained as houses. In my view, any additional traffic leaving and entering the site would impede traffic flow on this stretch of the A40 and could lead to an unacceptable detrimental impact on highway safety because of poor visibility for vehicles leaving the site in both directions.
10. I note that there are bus stops and shops within a short walking distance and that bike parking is proposed to encourage residents to cycle. I also appreciate that the appellant went to some lengths to overcome the Council's concerns, including offering to place an automated parking barrier and a convex mirror at the entrance of the car park to improve visibility and control vehicles entering and leaving the site. However, there is no guarantee that residents would use more sustainable transport modes. Also, I agree with the Council that the proposed mitigation is not a substitute for good visibility and a barrier may make matters worse in terms of impeding traffic using the access. In any case, mitigation details have not been provided for me to consider, nor has any parking survey data that the appellant may have offered to provide the Council.

11. The examples provided by the appellant of properties with rear parking and access on to the A40 were all between buildings that were set back further from the road than the appeal site and neighbouring properties. They also had relatively low boundary walls or were wider where the access met the footway. Consequently, they had better visibility than the appeal site entrance and were not therefore directly comparable with that of the proposed development.
12. Overall, I conclude that the access is not suitable to accommodate the increased traffic associated with the proposed development, which would lead to conflict between vehicles using the site and traffic on the A40 to the detriment of highway safety. The proposal therefore conflicts with the National Planning Policy Framework (2021), Policy DM33 of the Wycombe District Local Plan (2019), Buckinghamshire Council Local Transport Plan 4 (2016) and the Buckinghamshire Council Highways Development Management Guidance document (2018) which require that development has safe and convenient access to the local highway network.

Other Matters

13. I have had regard to other matters raised including rights of access, disputed land ownership and the effect of the proposal on neighbouring tenant's living conditions regarding odours associated with proposed bin storage. However, as I am dismissing the appeal on the main issues for the reasons given above, I have not pursued these matters further.

Conclusion

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

P D Sedgwick

INSPECTOR