
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 1 September 2022

by L Page BSc (Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 22 Sep 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/V3120/W/22/3297561

1 Littleworth Hill, Wantage OX12 9AG

- 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. & Mrs. Andy & Diane Thompson against the decision of Vale of White Horse District Council.
 - The application Ref P21/V2626/FUL, dated 13 September 2021, was refused by notice dated 8 November 2021.
 - The development proposed is new dwelling, alterations to parking and associated works.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matter

2. The site is located within the nutrient neutrality zone declared by Natural England. Consequently, the proposal has been considered in the context of statutory duties set out within the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (the Habitats Regulations) and is dealt with later in my decision.

Main Issue

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

Reasons

4. The site is located on the corner of Littleworth Hill and Denchworth Road within the main built up area of Wantage. The existing dwelling and plot at the site clearly front and are orientated to relate more with Littleworth Hill than Denchworth Road and this should guide the assessment of context.
5. As such, Littleworth Hill contains large dwellings that sit on spacious plots with extensive garden areas. This gives rise to a feeling of openness in and around the dwellings.
6. The site is consistent with the character and appearance of the area in that it too relates to a large dwelling on a spacious plot with extensive garden areas. Consequently, it makes a positive contribution to the feeling of openness along the street.

7. Some of the dwellings along the street have single storey garages to the side, including the site in this case. Some have been extended upwards or subsumed into the main dwelling as part of a sideward extension. Whatever the case, no one configuration detracts from the fact that the buildings are observed as being part of the same planning unit.
8. The proposal would subdivide the existing plot of land, creating a much smaller plot of land for the siting of a new dwelling, which would be detached and prominent¹ as a separate dwelling, even with landscaping.
9. As such it would be viewed as a separate planning unit and would not be comparable to other extensions along the street, which are observed as part of the same planning unit². Therefore, a new separate dwelling on a smaller plot of land would present as a cramped and incongruous arrangement within the prevailing context.
10. Whilst the use class is the same, it is plain that an additional dwelling and planning unit would lead to a greater intensity in the use of the land compared to a single dwelling. This would reinforce how the proposal presents itself within the street.
11. There is no convincing evidence demonstrating that the existing configuration of the dwelling and its side on relationship with Denchworth Road is harmful to the area, or that the proposal's active frontage would generate legitimate benefits in this regard.
12. The finer details associated with the proposal's design, such as the use of materials and building lines, among other things, are not in dispute and altogether do not remedy the incongruity already described in the context of views from Littleworth Hill.
13. Overall, the proposal would harm the character and appearance of the area and conflict with Policy CP37 of the Local Plan 2031 Part 1 Strategic Sites and Policies 2016, which among other things requires proposals to be of high quality design that responds positively to the site and its surroundings and reinforces local identity.

Other Matters

14. Pursuant to the Habitats Regulations, as I am dismissing the appeal for other reasons alone, it is not necessary for me to consider nutrient neutrality or likely significant effects of the proposal.
15. One dwelling would be a limited addition to housing supply, and therefore any socio-economic benefits associated with construction or improving the housing mix in the area would be similarly limited.
16. Matters relating to transport and residential amenity space³ or other such matters detailed in the officer report that are not disputed by the Council have not been determinative under the appeal.

¹ Easily seen

² This logic would also apply to the extant planning permission P21/V0827/HH, which therefore carries limited weight in favour of the proposal as a fallback position.

³ Insofar as a term may relate to the living conditions of occupiers

17. The absence of objection in and of itself does not mean that the proposal is acceptable in all other respects. The proposal has been assessed based on the evidence presented in accordance with the development plan and any other material considerations.
18. Whilst I acknowledge the proposals, at least in part, have potentially come forward to meet family needs, there is no evidence that these needs are more than matters of convenience and that they should be given any more than limited weight in the planning balance.

Conclusion

19. For the reasons given, the appeal is dismissed.

Liam Page

INSPECTOR