



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 22 November 2022

by H Wilkinson BSc (Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 16 December 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/Q3115/W/22/3297954

1 Kennylands Road, Sonning Common, Reading RG4 9JR

- 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 Gareth Bertram of Gareth Bertram Ltd against the decision of South Oxfordshire District Council.
 - The application Ref P21/S3877/FUL, dated 6 September 2021, was refused by notice dated 8 March 2022.
 - The development proposed is the demolition of the existing dwelling and the erection of two detached dwellings with parking and amenity space.
-

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matter

2. The appeal is accompanied by an Energy Statement which demonstrates that each dwelling would deliver and exceed a 40% reduction in carbon emissions as required by Policy DES10 of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011-2035 (LP). On this basis and given that the Council is no longer contesting the second reason for refusal, I have identified the main issue accordingly.

Main Issue

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

Reasons

4. The site subject to this appeal lies within a residential area characterised by properties of varying age, appearance and scale and occupies a prominent location at the junction of Kennylands Road and Wood Lane. Whilst the positioning of properties within their plots and set back from the highway is generally consistent along the road, the varied form and appearance of dwellings is the most noticeable characteristic of the area. Together with the abundance of soft landscaping, this variety positively contributes to the character and appearance of the area.
5. No 1 Kennylands Road formerly comprised a much larger plot which has recently been sub-divided. There are 2 detached dwellings located either side of the existing dwelling which have been developed within the former garden area. Despite the common design, the visual uniformity of the recent additions is sufficiently broken up by the existing dwelling thus maintaining a varied street scene.

6. The appeal proposal seeks to demolish the existing dwelling and infill the plot with 2 identical units, the overall scale and layout of which would be in keeping with the 2 adjacent dwellings. Despite the rendered sections, single storey element and inclusion of dormer windows, there would be little variety between the 4 units when viewed from the road. Therefore, whilst the set back of the proposed dwellings from the highway and softly landscaped frontage would be generally consistent with the 'Plotlands' character type as defined within the Sonning Common Character Assessment and Design Statement 2013 (Consultation Draft), the homogeneous design of the proposal in combination with the adjacent units would be discordant with the varied character and appearance of the surrounding area.
7. The narrow and fairly even spacing of the proposed dwellings across the site would be at odds with the varying building gaps noted in the area and would further reinforce the discordant regularity of the proposed scheme. Notwithstanding the width of the existing property, proposed roof structure and set back of the dwellings from the highway, the proposal would appear cramped within the site by virtue of the proposed positioning and loss of lateral space. The effect of which would be compounded by the vertical emphasis of the proposed building design and prominent site location. Although mindful of the Council's comments regarding the amount of car parking to the front of the proposed dwellings, this does not add to my concerns. Accordingly, I find that the appeal proposal would be an obtrusive and incongruous form of development.
8. My attention has been drawn by the appellant to No's 5-11 Kennylands Road and No's 88-98 Wood Lane which are located close to the appeal site. Whilst the identified groups display similar characteristics, particularly their proportions and set back from the road, given the irregular spacing between the dwellings and varied external finish including fenestration, the aforementioned pockets are not of unified appearance. These examples therefore do not compare to the appeal proposal.
9. For these reasons, I find that the proposed development would harm the character and appearance of the area contrary to LP Policies DES1 and DES2 together with Policies H3 and D1 of the Sonning Common Neighbourhood Development Plan – Final Submission Referendum version 2012-2027. Collectively, and amongst other aspects, these policies seek to secure high quality design which respects the local context and reflects the positive features that make up the character of the local area thereby enhancing and complementing the site's surroundings. The proposal is also inconsistent with the design of objectives of the National Planning Policy Framework which seek to ensure that development proposals add to the overall quality of the area.

Other Matters

10. The proposed development would utilise previously developed land and be located in a built-up area of the village. Nevertheless, the provision of one additional unit would make little difference to housing supply in the area. As such, I am not persuaded that these factors would outweigh the harm identified to the character and appearance of the area.
11. Issues relating to the principle of development including the loss of the original dwelling and re-development of the appeal site have been brought to my attention. These issues are largely identified and considered within the

Council's delegated report and it is noted that the Council did not consider these were reasons to refuse the application. I have been provided with no substantive evidence which would prompt me to disagree with the Council's conclusions on these matters. With respect to potential planning enforcement matters, this remains the responsibility of the local planning authority to investigate and enforce where appropriate. As such, whilst having regard to the concerns expressed by local residents, I give these factors limited weight.

Conclusion

12. For the reasons outlined above, having regard to the development plan as a whole and all other relevant material considerations, including the Framework, the appeal is dismissed.

H Wilkinson

INSPECTOR