



Appeal Decisions

Site visit made on 31 October 2024

by B Phillips BSc MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 20 November 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/V3120/W/24/3347096

9 Wick Green, Grove, Wantage OX12 0AS

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by James Gordon against the decision of Vale of White Horse District Council.
 - The application Ref is P24/V0598/FUL.
 - The development proposed is to construct x 2 2 bed dwellings. Add a front porch to existing dwelling.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. A garden layout plan has been submitted with the appeal, illustrating the location of neighbouring properties referred to in the appeal statement. The additional submitted information does not include any alterations to the proposed scheme which interested parties of the opportunity may have wished to comment on.

Main Issue

3. The main issue in this case is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the surrounding area.

Reasons

4. The appeal site is located on Wick Green, a short cul de sac characterised by terraced and semi-detached properties of a similar scale, set within plots of a similar size. Whilst a number of dwellings have been extended to the rear or are curtailed by a corner position, the good sized gardens, set back from the road and areas of landscaping provide a sense of spaciousness. The general regularity in scale contributes positively to the character and appearance of the street. The landscaping, including the corner junction where the appeal site is located, contributes positively in softening the built form of the surrounding area.
5. Whilst there are examples of full width hardstanding and parking areas to some frontages within Wick Green, these are broken up by boundary planting in between dwellings. The remaining majority of frontages, like the appeal property, are mostly landscaped and grassed, and contribute positively to the verdant character of the street scene.

6. The garden spaces for the proposed flats would be sited at the side and rear. However, the rear garden space serving the first floor unit would be an incongruously thin strip extending to the rear. This would be at odds with the consistently sizeable garden areas in the street.
7. In addition, the garden space for the ground floor unit would comprise of a small space immediately around the rear of the building and to its side. It would appear constricted and again, would result in limited garden space that appears at odds with the consistently sizeable garden areas in the street. This would erode the area's sense of spaciousness.
8. Whilst finishing materials would match the surrounding dwellings, the proposed plots would be noticeably smaller than any of the neighbouring dwellings and would appear comparatively cramped and at odds with the general consistent larger plot size in the surrounding area. This would erode the area's sense of spaciousness and regularity of scale. Even if this is not visible from the adjoining car parking area, it would be evident to the occupiers of neighbouring dwellings and buildings.
9. The proposal would result in 5 car parking spaces set out in front of the new building and no 9. The submitted plans do not show any landscaping breaking up this space and as such, this would result in a significant and prominent length of unbroken hardstanding. Landscaping on each end of this space, including the retention of the southern boundary hedging would not mitigate the incongruous width and expanse of hardstanding. This would harm the verdant character of the street scene.
10. Whilst there are examples of similar expanses of hardstanding, in front of adjoining dwellings within Westbrook, a nearby cul de sac, however this relates to a different character context and is separate in terms of character and appearance. Similarly, a number of photographs are also provided of parking areas nearby the site¹, however these do not relate to Wick Green. Therefore, while there is hardstanding elsewhere in the vicinity, this has not altered the context of the appeal site and does not justify granting permission for otherwise harmful development.
11. It is understood that permission has been granted for a new dwelling in this location², however the proposal before me enlarges this approved property and subdivides it and the garden area. As such its visual impact, as set out above, is not directly comparable.
12. The proposal therefore would harm the character and appearance of the surrounding area. As such, it would conflict with Policy CP37 of the Local Plan 2031 Part 1 (2016), which requires high quality design that responds positively to the site and its surroundings.

Other Matters

13. The appeal site sits in close proximity to the Grove Conservation Area (CA), with its boundary running along Denchworth Road. No detail is provided regarding this designation; however, it is evident that its significance lies with its special architectural and historic interest, and I observed a number of high-quality historic buildings around the Green area to the west of the appeal site.

¹ Churchward Close, Breakspears Yard, Walnut Tree Cottages

² Application reference P21/V2550/FUL

14. The setting of the CA is partly made up of more modern development, and as such, has a limited role in the significance of the heritage asset. The appeal site as part of a typical suburban cul de sac, would sit comfortably as part of its existing mixed surrounding context. As such, the proposal would not harm the setting of the CA. The development would not therefore conflict with the prevention of harm to heritage assets, including their setting, goals of Paragraph 206 of the Framework.
15. The proposal would align with the Framework where it seeks to significantly boost the supply of homes, in a location with good access to services and facilities. There would be social and economic benefits from the construction and occupation of the dwellings. There would also be some improvements to biodiversity through the provision of bat and bird boxes. However, given the quantum of development in this case, these benefits would be small.
16. It is not demonstrated that the proposal would result in low cost accommodation, that it could be secured in any way or that there is a particular need for 'low cost' accommodation in this area. As such, I give this benefit modest weight. The lack of any harm identified to matters such as highway safety, and the lack of objection from the parish council or statutory consultees are neutral factors which do not weigh in favour of the proposal. Even if the proposal would meet minimum garden space requirements in terms of living conditions, this is a separate matter to character and appearance, and as such, does not justify or mitigate harm in this respect. Similarly, even if the proposal would provide a more compatible and better arrangement for No 9, there is no evidence before me to suggest that the approved access is substandard in this respect, and as such, the benefits in this regard are minor.
17. Planning decisions should be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. For the reasons set out above, the proposal would harm the character and appearance of the surroundings. The minor benefits outlined above do not outweigh this identified harm.

Conclusion

18. The identified harm means the proposal would not accord with the development plan policies when read as a whole. The benefits and other considerations are of insufficient weight to justify granting planning permission contrary to the development plan. As such, I conclude the appeal is dismissed.

B Phillips

INSPECTOR