



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/24/3346844

9 Wick Green, Grove, Wantage, Oxfordshire, 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 P23/V2554/FUL.
 - The development proposed is to provide 2 x 2-bedroom, semi-detached starter homes. Add a porch to existing dwelling.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The appellant has submitted a drawing 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.
3. However, the appellant has also submitted an amended floorplan drawing and an amended garden layout. I have considered the revised plans under the principles established by the Courts. Whilst the floorplan drawing was submitted prior to the determination of the application by the council, the amended drawings have not been the subject of consultation, and in my view, they materially amend the proposal in order to address the reasons for refusal. The appeal process should not be used to evolve a scheme. Therefore, were I to accept them it may prejudice the interests of interested parties. Consequently, I have determined the appeal on the basis of the scheme considered by the Council.

Main Issues

4. The main issues in this case are:
 - the effect the proposal would have on the character and appearance of the surrounding area; and
 - whether the proposal would provide adequate living conditions for future occupiers, with respect to the provision of internal space.

Reasons

Character and appearance

5. 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.
6. 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.
7. The garden space for unit 9b would be constrained to the space immediately next to the rear elevation and side of the property. This would result in a limited garden area and plot that would appear cramped and at odds with the consistently sizeable garden areas and plots in the street. Whilst finishing materials to the building would match the surroundings, 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.
8. The proposal would result in 5 car parking spaces set out in front of the site and No 9. The submitted plans do not show any landscaping breaking up this space and as such, this would result in a prominent length of unbroken hardstanding. Landscaping on each end of this space, including in front of 9b, would not mitigate the visual impact of the incongruous width of hardstanding. This would harm the verdant character of the street scene.
9. 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. 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.
10. Permission¹ has been granted for a new dwelling in this location, however the proposal before me enlarges this property and subdivides it and the garden area. The Council also set out that there would be landscaping between the parking spaces of the approved scheme. The appellant does not dispute this. It is not demonstrated that similar landscaping could be secured through a condition. As such, its visual impact, as set out above, is not directly comparable.
13. 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

¹ Application reference P21/V2550/FUL

2031 Part 1 (2016), which requires high quality design that responds positively to the site and its surroundings.

Living Conditions for Future Occupiers

11. Policy DP2 of the Local Plan 2031 Part 2 (2019) (LP2) requires development of new one and two-bed market housing and all affordable housing to accord with Nationally Described Space Standards.
12. The national space standards requires 70 square metres of internal space for a two-bedroomed dwelling providing three bedspaces, as shown on the submitted plans. The appellant does not dispute the Councils assertion that the two dwellings would have approximately 60 square metres of internal space. This represents a significant shortfall.
13. The proposed living space would therefore not meet the minimum internal standards and would not provide adequate living conditions for future occupiers in this respect.
14. The proposal would conflict with LP2 Policy DP2 which seeks to ensure appropriate standards of internal space.

Other Matters

15. 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.
16. 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.
17. 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. However, given the quantum of development in this case, these benefits would be small.
18. It is stated that the proposal would result in affordable or low cost accommodation, however there is no mechanism before me to secure this. 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.
19. 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 and would not provide adequate living conditions for future occupiers, with respect to the provision of internal space. The minor benefits outlined above do not outweigh this identified harm.

Conclusion

20. 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