



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 18 February 2025

by S Simms BSc (Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 12 March 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/D3125/D/24/3357422

61 Burford Road, Carterton, Oxfordshire OX18 3AQ

- 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 Mr Jonathan Rees against the decision of West Oxfordshire District Council.
 - The application Ref is 24/01463/HHD.
 - The development proposed is off street parking to existing dwelling.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The proposal was amended prior to refusal to remove a vehicle turning area and the existing footpath verge crossing to reduce the amount of hard surface. I have determined the application based on the amended drawings.

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 contains a detached two-storey house in reconstituted stone fronting on to a main road into Carterton town centre, which is about 300m away. The road has consistent character for over a mile; straight with wide verges containing footways and cycleways, lined with numerous mature boundary trees and hedges.
5. Whilst there are front driveways along the main road into the town centre, plots are generally wide, and vehicle access is often from side roads or shared between two or more plots so that wider crossings of the verge appear few and well-spaced. There are double yellow lines along both sides of the road from the town centre until a junction about 185m north of the site.
6. The house is one of a number on a large, redeveloped corner plot, access having been taken from a side road. Houses fronting the main road and some fronting the side road have rear parking courts and garages instead of front driveways, with only footpaths crossing their gardens and the verge. This keeps these frontages clear of vehicles and minimises the need for hard surfaces.

7. Along the main road frontage, this has also allowed trees and a long hedge to be planted, reinforcing and contributing to the character and appearance of the area. Apparently, poor soil conditions on the appeal site frontage meant that the hedge there has not established; however, a hornbeam tree in the front garden has.
8. The proposal would remove the tree, hedge, a section of verge to the main road, then lay a blockwork driveway and tarmac crossing with dropped kerb. The existing footpath crossing would be grassed over, the tree replanted, soil conditions improved, and the hedge replanted along the remaining frontage.
9. This would introduce vehicle activity to the frontage and increase the area of hard surfacing, detracting from the uncluttered character and harming the generally verdant appearance.
10. The need to replace the tree to be lost would lead to a short- to medium-term loss of landscaping, which would cause further harm to character and appearance. The potential for soil improvements does not offset the level of harm that would be caused by its initial loss.
11. Overall, the proposal conflicts with Policies OS2 and OS4 of the West Oxfordshire Local Plan, which seek to protect the character of the locality, and runs contrary to sections of the West Oxfordshire Design Guide that seek to maintain the quality of landscape and balance the impact of parked cars.

Other Matters

12. The absence of a railway station and high frequency bus services to destinations beyond the town may limit travel choices, but I do not find that the appeal site is in a very unsustainable location. I saw on my site visit that a primary school and the town centre are in walking distance. Within the latter, a convenience store, coffee shop and pharmacy are within 400m and three supermarkets, a health centre, library and other facilities are a little further away.
13. I do not doubt that parking on grass verges may occur and may be evidence of parking stress, but the restrictions that I observed on site mean that such parking would be an offence. In the absence of evidence that provision is detrimentally below local standards, I do not consider that this or a lack of choice for longer journeys leads to a need for further spaces and I attach limited weight to this.
14. Whilst the West Oxfordshire Design Guide advises against parking courtyards, it also states that for larger developments, a range of solutions should be provided appropriate to context. I have noted above some of their benefits in this case. In any event, the proposal would not result in the removal of the rear parking court, and I therefore attach limited weight to this consideration.
15. I do accept that there are some security advantages to a parking space at the front of the house and additional flexibility in having two means of access, including for visitors. I therefore attach weight to these considerations.
16. I do not have full details of the conditions, subject to which the Local Highway Authority did not object, but they appear to include provision of the turning facility omitted in the amended drawings. Whilst it is unclear whether it was reconsulted, there is no evidence that unacceptable highway impacts would result.

Conclusion

17. The proposal would harm the uncluttered character and verdant appearance of the main road and so conflict with the development plan as a whole. As this would outweigh the benefits of an additional parking space and the security and flexibility benefits of an additional access, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

S Simms

INSPECTOR