



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 7 April 2025

by **D R Kay BA Dip.Arch RIBA**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 28 May 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/Q3115/D/24/3351882

Pennyford House, Stoke Row Road, Peppard Common, Henley-on-Thames, Oxfordshire, RG9 5JE

- 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 Alex Hookway against the decision of South Oxfordshire District Council.
 - The application Ref is P24/S1374/HH.
 - The development proposed is proposed acoustic timber fence to replace the existing post and rail timber fence.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The parties' documents refer to the 2023 National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework). However, I have had regard to the Framework (December 2024) in reaching my decision. As none of the relevant paragraphs have altered substantively, it has not been necessary to consult the parties.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area including the Chilterns National Landscape (CNL).

Reasons

4. The appeal site is a residential property sitting within a large plot located to the east of Stoke Row Road within the village of Peppard Common. The village is situated to the north-west of the larger village of Sonning Common with which it conjoins and is within the CNL. This part of the village is characterised by large residential dwellings set within large plots. Many are set well back from the road behind mature hedges which substantially obscure views of housing.
5. The appeal property currently has a 1.2m high post and rail timber fence to much of its' frontage, which adjoins a brick and flint stone wall and recessed gate piers at the property's vehicular entrance, creating the property's western boundary with the highway. Behind the existing timber fence is immature hedge planting which sits in front of and in some cases under a belt of mature trees, many of which are subject to individual Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs).
6. Boundary treatments to the properties to the north and south of the appeal site on both sides of the road vary, with isolated examples of timber closed board fences,

along with dense green hedges, which are significantly more common, or a mix of low masonry walls with hedges above and behind. The boundary treatments overall are around 1.8m or higher, obscuring views into the front gardens of individual properties, and contributing to the semi-rural character of the village at this location.

7. The proposal would replace the existing timber fence with a 1.8m high closed board timber fence, joining onto the existing 1.8m high timber fence of the adjacent Corner House to the north, and with the brick and flint stone wall and gate piers at the property's vehicular entrance, creating enclosure to the western boundary with the highway, enhancing the privacy of the front garden and providing a level of acoustic protection from the highway.
8. The line of the western boundary of the appeal site is set back from the edge of the highway carriageway by between 1.8m and 2m and is raised above its level by between 400 and 500mm. The proposed fence would sit on top of this raised verge. The road at this location curves, such that the proposed fence would be highly visible to anyone travelling either north or south on Stoke Row Road, either on foot or by vehicle. The combination of the raised level of the verge and the height of the fence would make it unduly prominent within the street scene, an urbanising feature which would detrimentally harm the rural character of the area.
9. The appellant has drawn my attention to the presence of other such 1.8m high timber fences in the immediate area, at Corner House to the north and The Coach House to the south beyond Rock Cottage. However, the fence to Corner House is substantially obscured by dense planting in front of it for most of its length, and so its effect is significantly mitigated, whilst the shiplap timber panel fence at The Coach House to the south, is a very urban aesthetic for such a rural location within the CNL and does not sit comfortably within the locality.
10. Rotherfield Peppard Parish Council has commented that the proposal would benefit from additional planting in front of the fence to soften the visual effect and would be more in keeping with the character of the rural area. Whilst planting might be beneficial in some respects, it would have an adverse effect on highway safety. The curve of Stoke Row Road at this location, together with the position of the vehicular access to the appeal site, and the fact that the verge in front of the fence is raised above the carriageway level, would mean that any such planting would obscure the visibility splay in a northerly direction and would render the access unsafe, both for residents exiting the site and for other users of the highway.
11. An arboriculture statement was submitted with the application by the appellant. The LPA's consulting forestry officer has assessed the proposal as having little impact on the amenity and condition of the trees subject to TPO's and judged them satisfactory, subject to the imposition of a tree protection condition.
12. The fence would improve privacy for occupants of the appeal property and would to an extent provide some acoustic screening from the highway. However, the visual harm it would cause to the character and appearance of the area, within the CNL, outweighs these benefits.
13. I conclude that the proposal would have a harmful effect on the character and appearance of the area, including the CNL. Therefore, the proposal is contrary to Policies STRAT1, DES1, DES2 and ENV1 of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2035 (SOLP), which require, amongst other things, that development protects and enhances the countryside and those areas inside the CNL, reflects the local context

in scale, height, grain and details that make up the character of the surrounding area, and should only be permitted where it conserves or enhances the character and natural beauty of the CNL.

Conclusion

14. For the reasons set out above, the appeal proposal would be contrary to the development plan as a whole and there are no material considerations, including policies in the Framework, that would justify determining other than in accordance with it. Therefore, the appeal should be dismissed.

D R Kay

INSPECTOR