



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 30 April 2025

by **A O'Neill BA (Hons) MA MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 19 June 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/V3120/W/25/3360587

85 Howard Cornish Road, Marcham, Abingdon, Oxfordshire OX13 6PU

- 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 and Mrs Gary Doran against the decision of Vale of White Horse District Council.
 - The application Ref is P24/V1335/FUL.
 - The development proposed is a new dwelling.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

3. The appeal site is in a residential area where the prevailing form of development is two storey detached and semi-detached houses set back in their plots with frontage parking areas and spacious gardens. The site comprises land which is currently part of the garden area for number 85 Howard Cornish Road.
4. The proposed dwelling would be located between number 85 Howard Cornish Road and The Long Barn. The Long Barn is a traditional stone barn which has been converted to residential use. It is set further back from the road than 85 Howard Cornish Road and has a large front garden and parking area. The property is physically and visually separated from the appeal site by mature boundary hedges.
5. The appeal site is thus seen in the context of the street scene defined by numbers 85, 87 and 89 Howard Cornish Road. These evenly spaced detached dwellings are set at an angle to the road with large, open frontages. The three dwellings have a similar appearance and a consistent ridge height. The layout and appearance of these properties creates a rhythm to the street scene and gives a spacious feeling to this part of Howard Cornish Road.
6. Number 85 Howard Cornish Road differs to neighbouring properties in that its garden space is located to the side as well as the rear of the dwelling. The appellant describes this side garden area, where the proposed dwelling would be located, as under-utilised land due to the irregular shape of the existing plot. Notwithstanding the appellant's viewpoint, on my site visit, I observed that the side garden area provides a gap between built development at number 85 and The Long Barn property which

contributes positively to the spacious character of this part of Howard Cornish Road. Whilst there would be a small garden area retained between the proposed dwelling and the Long Barn, the built form of the proposed dwelling would dominate the existing space, which, in my judgement, would harm the spacious character of the area.

7. The existing plot of 85 Howard Cornish Road would be subdivided to accommodate the proposed development. Although there is some variety in plot shapes and sizes in the area, the two resulting plots would be smaller than others in the vicinity of the appeal site. Consequently, the garden areas for each dwelling would also be smaller than is typical of the area. It is suggested that the proposed plots would relate in size and scale to smaller dwellings along Howard Cornish Road and Anson Close, although I have not been provided with specific examples. Nevertheless, the proposed development would be seen in the context of development in the immediate vicinity of the appeal site on Howard Cornish Road where plot sizes are generally larger and garden areas more spacious than those proposed.
8. The proposed dwelling would be of a smaller scale and mass than others in the immediate vicinity and it would have a lower ridge height than the neighbouring properties at 85, 87 and 89 Howard Cornish Road. Whilst I appreciate there is a mix of architectural styles in the surrounding area, the proposed development would be seen as a continuation of the built development at 85, 87 and 89 Howard Cornish Road which have a similar mass and appearance to each other.
9. The smaller plot size along with a smaller scale dwelling would be inconsistent with those neighbouring properties. The proposed dwelling would appear cramped in comparison, making it an incongruous addition to the street scene and a disruption to the rhythm in the layout and appearance of this part of Howard Cornish Road.
10. It is suggested that a smaller living space and garden area are proposed because the dwelling is for the appellants to live in during their retirement. Be this as it may, the needs of the appellants are likely to change in time whereas the harm identified would be permanent.
11. The proposed dwelling has been designed to avoid overlooking to neighbouring properties. However, this results in a blank first floor rear elevation. This contrived design furthers the incongruity of the proposed dwelling which would not be fully overcome with the use of sympathetic materials.
12. The proposed dwelling would be sited to follow approximately the existing front and rear building lines of 85 Howard Cornish Road. However, because the road curves towards the appeal site, the front elevation of the proposed dwelling would be located closer to the footway than number 85. This would leave a very small frontage area for the proposed dwelling and means that the car parking provision would be located between the side elevations of 85 Howard Cornish Road and the proposed dwelling. This would be at odds with the prevailing layout of development in the area where dwellings are set back in their plots allowing space for frontage parking.
13. The siting of the proposed dwelling in relation to the footway and the location of the car parking spaces would further contribute to the proposal appearing cramped within the street scene. The limited frontage to the appeal property would also detract from the spacious character of the area.

14. Taking all of the above into account, the proposal would be harmful to the character and appearance of the area. Consequently, it would conflict with Core Policy 37 of the Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031 Part 1 Strategic Sites and Policies (2016) (LP Part 1) which requires new development to be of high quality design that responds positively to the site and surroundings, reinforces local identity and is sensitive to its context regarding scale, massing and height. There would also be conflict with the South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse Joint Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (2022) where it promotes excellence in architectural quality whilst respecting the local context. Core Policy 1 of the LP Part 1 is also cited in the reason for refusal. This is a generic policy which does not contain anything specific to the appeal proposal and, as such, I find no direct conflict.

Other Matters

15. The site is proximate to the Grade II* listed Hyde Farmhouse (the listed building), which is located to the rear of the appeal site. Mindful of the statutory duty set out in s66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (the Act), I have had special regard to the desirability of preserving its setting.
16. The significance and special interest of the listed building stem primarily from its architectural interest as a surviving example of a medieval farmhouse. Historic interest comes from its tangible link to an agrarian past and the traditional materials and methods embedded within its fabric. The existence and proximity of relatively recent residential estate development within its setting (including the presence of the appeal site) does little to reveal the value of this designated heritage asset. If anything, it detracts from it. My finding is reinforced by the similar conclusion of the Council's Heritage Team.
17. Views between the appeal site and Hyde Farmhouse are largely obscured by an existing mature boundary hedge which would likely remain. Moreover, the proposed dwelling would form part of the residential estate. An additional dwelling in this context would not further compromise the setting of Hyde Farmhouse. As such, the proposal would preserve the surviving significance and special interest of the listed building. Nevertheless, this lack of harm is neutral factor and does not weigh in support of the appeal or alter my overall conclusions on the main issue.
18. The proposal would make an efficient use of land and would contribute to housing supply and mix in an accessible location which accords with LP Part 1 Policy CP08. There would be some economic uplift in the local economy during the construction process and from the future spending of occupiers. However, the contribution of one dwelling to the housing supply would be minimal. As such, these benefits only attract limited weight and do not outweigh the harm I have found in relation to the main issue of this case.
19. My attention has been drawn to the Armed Forces Covenant which was introduced by the Armed Forces Act 2021. This places a legal obligation on certain public bodies to consider the principles of the Covenant when exercising certain functions. In the context of this appeal, it requires public bodies to consider the specific needs of armed forces personnel, veterans and their families when implementing housing policies and decisions.
20. The appellants' evidence explains they have both served in the military and indicates that their housing needs are affected by injuries sustained during their service. However, this has not been further explained and the appellants' specific housing

needs have not been articulated. It is not demonstrated that the appellants are unable to access a suitable home. As such, I have not been provided with information that would take precedence over the development plan policies.

21. Reference is made to an allowed appeal on another site in Marcham (APP/V3120/W/22/3310186). However, based on the evidence submitted, it is not shown that the circumstances of the two cases are directly comparable. Nevertheless, the locations are different. Given the unique nature of land and development proposals, the effects on the immediate context are highly likely to be materially different. On that basis, the appeal decision has had little bearing on my assessment of the character and appearance in this case, which I have determined on its own merits.
22. I acknowledge the proposal is acceptable in terms of living conditions, access and provision for waste. However, these points do not outweigh my previous findings.
23. I note that no objections were received from neighbours. I also acknowledge that the response from Marcham Parish Council sought clarification on some matters and does not state the Parish Council objects to the proposal. Nevertheless, the lack of objection does not equate to a lack of harm.

Conclusion

24. For the reasons given above, the proposal would conflict with the development plan as a whole and there are no material considerations that outweigh that conflict. Therefore, the appeal is dismissed.

A O'Neill

INSPECTOR