



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/25/3360324

Land adj to Collinsmith Drive, Grove, Wantage, Oxfordshire OX12 7PS

- 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 George Grima against the decision of Vale of White Horse District Council.
 - The application Ref is P24/V1236/FUL.
 - The development proposed is the erection of a 2 storey, 4 bedroom dwelling.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matter

2. The address above is taken from the decision notice, which differs slightly to the address on the planning application form, but which suitably describes the appeal site's location.

Main Issues

3. The main issues are the effect of the proposal on:
 - the character and appearance of the area, and;
 - the safety of highway users having regard to the visibility of the access.

Reasons

Character and Appearance

4. The appeal site is in a residential area and comprises an area of open grassland located at the junction of Collinsmith Drive and Howard Avenue. Triangular in shape, the site is bound on two sides by the footpaths along Collinsmith Drive and Howard Avenue. The third side is bound by a footpath which runs between the appeal site and the side boundaries of 1 Collinsmith Drive and 8 Mayfield Avenue.
5. The appeal site is one of a number of parcels of open space across the wider residential estate which contribute to the verdant and spacious character of the area. These open spaces are framed by rows of evenly spaced detached and semi-detached houses set back in their plots. There is some variation in the type and appearance of existing dwellings in the vicinity of the appeal site. However, each row of dwellings has a similar appearance, massing and siting within their plots. These layouts give the street scene a strong rhythm and contribute to the spacious feel of the area.

6. In its current form, the appeal site makes a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the area. The proposed dwelling and garden area would occupy approximately half of the existing grassed area. Whilst the remainder of the site would remain open, the proposed built development would dominate the space and would result in harm to the verdant and spacious character of the area.
7. The proposed dwelling would be located at the widest part of the site fronting Collinsmith Drive, adjacent to 1 Collinsmith Drive. It would be viewed as a continuation of the built development along this part of Collinsmith Drive, sited to generally follow the established front and rear building lines of numbers 1 and 3 Collinsmith Drive.
8. However, the proposed dwelling's appearance would not be consistent with adjacent dwellings. The proposed dwelling would have a pitched roof with eaves to its front and rear, whereas numbers 1 and 3 Collinsmith Drive have a similar appearance to each other and are gable fronted. Furthermore, the proposed dwelling would be two storeys across the width of its plot, whereas numbers 1 and 3 Collinsmith Drive have single storey garages to their sides which provide gaps between their two storey elements. Although the footpath between the appeal site and the side of 1 Collinsmith Drive would be retained, the relatively narrow gap that would result between the two storey side elevations would give the proposed dwelling a cramped appearance in relation to the site and the adjacent dwelling.
9. Given its location at the junction of two roads, the proposed dwelling would be a highly prominent and visually obtrusive feature in the street scene that would disrupt the established pattern of development in this area.
10. Taking all of the above into account, I conclude that the proposal would be harmful to the character and appearance of the area. Consequently, it would conflict with Policy CP37 of the Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031 Part 1 Strategic Sites and Policies (2016) (LP Part 1) which require, amongst other things, for new development to be of a high quality and for the scale and massing to be appropriate for the site and surrounding area. 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.

Highway Safety - access

11. The submitted plans do not demonstrate access visibility splays to meet Oxfordshire County Council's (OCC) highway standards. I note the comments from OCC Highways Officer in response to this appeal that indicate a suitable visibility splay could be achieved. However, the Highways Officer maintains their objection due to the fact the appellant has not submitted plans showing an acceptable visibility splay.
12. Based on my observations during my site visit, I consider that an acceptable visibility splay could be achieved from the appeal site for access on to Collinsmith Drive. Details of the visibility splay could be secured by the imposition of an appropriate condition, if the development had been otherwise acceptable.
13. On that basis I am satisfied that a safe and suitable access could be achieved in line with the expectations of paragraph 115 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

14. I therefore conclude that the proposal would not unduly prejudice highway safety and, subject to agreeing an acceptable visibility splay, the proposal would comply with Policy CP37 of the LP Part 1, Policy DP16 of the Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031 Part 2 Detailed Policies and Additional Sites (2019) which, amongst other things, seek ease of movement and suitable access arrangements.

Other Matters

15. As part of their appeal submission, the appellant has suggested potential amendments to their proposal, although no amended plans have been submitted. However, the appeal process should not be used to evolve a scheme, and I have therefore proceeded to determine the appeal on the basis of the plans as originally submitted.
16. I acknowledge that there has been no objection from utility providers and that the Council does not raise any objections to the proposal in terms of drainage, ecology, waste management, flood risk, or living conditions. Nevertheless, the absence of harm in these respects does not negate the harm I have found in relation to the first main issue.
17. The appellant refers to positive pre-application discussions with a Council Officer during a site meeting. However, I am mindful that pre-application discussions are informal and not binding on any future decision the Council may make once a proposal has been subject to the formal planning process. Therefore, this matter does not lead me to an alternative conclusion in this case.
18. The appellant has raised concerns about the submitted objections and the effect of the process on them. Be this as it may, these matters make no difference to my overall conclusion which is based on the planning merits of the proposal.
19. I understand the appellant's desire to build a house in a location to which they have a personal connection. However, this would be a private benefit. It is a well-founded principle that the planning system operates in the public interest, and so such personal considerations generally attract very little weight. Therefore, this consideration does not alter my conclusions.

Conclusion

20. Although I found that the concerns raised in relation to the visibility of the access could be surmounted, I nevertheless found that the proposal would result in permanent harm to the character and appearance of the area. Consequently, the proposal would conflict with the development plan when read as a whole. There are no material considerations that would outweigh that conflict. Therefore, the appeal is dismissed.

A O'Neill

INSPECTOR