



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 3 January 2024

by N Praine BSc (Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 24 January 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/X0360/W/23/3322810

1 Wheelton Close, Earley, Wokingham RG6 7YD

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Andrew Shone against the decision of Wokingham Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 230291, dated 6 February 2023, was refused by notice dated 10 March 2023.
 - The development proposed is described as a change of use of amenity land to residential garden and erection of a 1.8m high brick wall.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The appellant has submitted revised drawings as part of this appeal, these seek to reconfigure the change of use and siting of the proposed wall. However, it is not clear if all parties have had the opportunity to comment on the revised drawings and I cannot be certain that their interests would not be prejudiced if I were to accept them.
3. In addition, the appeal process is not generally the appropriate place to evolve development schemes. The scheme that is considered at appeal ought to be the same one that was considered by the Council. Therefore, I have determined the appeal based on the plans submitted with the application to the Council and upon which the views of interested parties were sought.

Main Issue

4. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

5. The relevant part of the appeal site comprises a broadly undeveloped strip of land which sits between the existing flank close board fence of 1 Wheelton Close and Skelmerdale Way.
6. This strip of land sits within a wider corner plot which features verdant landscaping, albeit partly overgrown. Nonetheless, its undeveloped green nature contributes to the landscape qualities of the area and a sense of spaciousness. These features provide relief from the wider developed character of the locality.

7. The proposed development would retain some space around the dwelling including the corner of the appeal site where Wheelton Close meets Skelmerdale Way. However, the erection of a hard boundary adjacent to the highway would significantly erode the openness of the existing undeveloped and verdant strip of land when viewed from public vantage points.
8. I acknowledge the retention of two existing trees. Nevertheless, the loss of the landscaped amenity land and its replacement with an austere hard boundary edge close to the highway would fail to integrate appropriately into the street scene. This would be harmful to the sense of spaciousness and verdant character of this area.
9. This harm would be further exacerbated by the creation of an inconsistent boundary with 45 Melling Close to the rear and these impacts in combination would not respect or enhance the character and appearance of the area.
10. My attention has been drawn to 10 and 17 Blackley Close and 11 Freshfield Close. No 10 appears to back onto a different road which has a different character to the appeal site. The flank fence at No 17 is also set in and therefore does not have the same impact as the proposed development.
11. No 11 has a side extension close to the boundary but this is limited in depth and therefore also does not have the same visual impact as the proposed development.
12. Some other dwellings including 1 Melling Close, its rear neighbour 9 Ribbleton Close and 1 Freshfield Close also have a flank boundary close to the highway. These examples reduce openness but are limited in number when considered against the wider street scene.
13. However, the impact of further hard boundary treatments closely sited to the highway, for the reasons set out above, would cumulatively erode the sense of spaciousness and landscape qualities of the area. Further reductions in this regard would not be sympathetic to the prevailing local character.
14. I acknowledge that litter has been deposited in the hedging and the proposed development would reduce future instances of this. However, it has not been shown that the proposed development would be the only way of managing littering. This therefore does not outweigh the harm I have identified above.
15. Consequently, the proposed development is unacceptable and would not sympathetically respond to the existing character and appearance of the area.
16. The proposals would therefore fail to comply with the relevant provisions of Policies CP1 and CP3 of the Wokingham Borough Local Development Framework Core Strategy (2010), Policies CC03 and TB21 of the Wokingham Borough Development Plan Managing Development Delivery Local Plan (2014), the Wokingham Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (2012), and the National Design Guide. These, amongst other things, require development proposals to contribute positively to the appearance of the public realm.

Other Matters

17. I have considered the matters raised in support of the appeal proposals, including the absence of highway or neighbour objections. However, the absence of harm in this regard is neutral in the planning balance and does not weigh for nor against the development proposal.

Conclusion

18. The proposal is contrary to the development plan as a whole and there are no other material considerations of sufficient weight to indicate a decision should be made other than in accordance with the development plan. I therefore conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

N Praine

INSPECTOR