

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 6 September 2016

by Roy Merrett BSc(Hons) DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government

Decision date: 28 September 2016

Appeal Ref: APP/P2935/D/16/3154699

1 West Sleekburn Farm Cottages, Bomarsund, Bedlington NE22 7AD

- 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 Mr and Mrs A Wilkes against the decision of Northumberland County Council.
 - The application Ref 15/02625/FUL, dated 7 August 2015, was refused by notice dated 13 July 2016.
 - The development proposed is the erection of a detached double garage.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matter

2. In its first reason for refusal the Council has referred to the Northumberland Local Plan Core Strategy Pre-Submission Draft – Proposed Major Modifications 2016. However as the emerging Core Strategy has yet to be subject to Examination I have not given weight to the policies referred to in that document as being relevant to this case.

Main Issues

3. The main issues are the effect of the development on i) the living conditions of existing and future occupiers of the host dwelling with regard to outlook and external amenity space and neighbouring residents with regard to outlook and ii) the character and appearance of the host dwelling and wider area.

Reasons

Living conditions of residents

4. The proposal comprises a large double garage with adjoining ancillary space which would be sited 6.7 metres from the nearest ground floor windows in the host dwelling. Whilst I acknowledge that the garden in which the garage would be sited is currently enclosed by tall hedges, the rear of the property still benefits from a relatively open outlook due to the absence of any tall buildings nearby.
 5. The development site slopes away from the main dwelling however the appellant has not provided information to confirm the finished levels of the garage. Notwithstanding the potential to secure its siting at a lower level
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through the imposition of a condition and its hipped roof design, the proximity of such a large structure dominating the full width of the house would result in an overbearing sense of enclosure on residents when viewed from the rear of the host dwelling and from the remaining patio space.

6. I acknowledge that this impact would be experienced by the appellants who in submitting the proposal are consenting to it. However I must take into account not only the quality of living conditions of existing residents but those of future occupiers too.
7. I acknowledge that the appellants seek to introduce garaging to their property, however in this case I conclude that it would result in unacceptable harm to outlook for existing and future occupiers of the host property by creating an overbearing sense of enclosure. The proposal would therefore conflict with the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) insofar as it seeks as a core planning principle to secure a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings.
8. The proposal would remove a large portion of the grassed lawn associated with the dwelling which forms a pleasant amenity feature. However a modest amount of external amenity space would be retained including a patio area immediately to the rear of the dwelling. A sufficient area would remain to allow for sitting out and for the drying of washing and storage of bins. In addition if the garage were constructed it would potentially free up private space at the front of the property currently used for car parking as replacement external amenity space. On this point I do not therefore concur with the Council that the amount of useable amenity space would be reduced to an unacceptable level.
9. Whilst the structure would be close to the side boundary with the adjoining dwelling, its hipped roof design and siting offset from the direct outlook away from rear windows, further mitigated by the presence of a tall boundary hedge would not result in significant harm to outlook from the rear of that property.
10. I therefore conclude that the development would not harm the living conditions of existing or future occupiers of the host dwelling in terms of loss of garden space. Neither would it result in harm to neighbouring residents in terms of loss of outlook. In this respect it would conform with Policy H8 of the Wansbeck District Local Plan 2007 (LP), the Wansbeck Residential Extension Design Guidance Supplementary Planning Document 2007 (SPD) and the Framework insofar as they seek the retention of reasonable garden space and for development not to have a significant effect on the outlook of neighbours.

Character and Appearance

11. The appeal site is at the end of a short line of terraced dwellings running perpendicular to Sleekburn Bank, the main road through the village. The terrace is accessed via an unmade track which also serves a small number of modern detached dwellings on the opposite side and eventually leads to a farm further to the west. In terms of levels the ground floor of the dwelling is markedly higher than the track, with the grassed lawn of the garden where the garage would be situated sloping down between the two.
12. The presence of dense and mature boundary planting serves to significantly screen the terrace. Whilst acknowledging that the effectiveness of this

screening would vary between seasons, when combined with the orientation and limited length of the terrace this serves to conceal any strong sense of uniformity in the appearance of the building line.

13. The proposed garage would be large and the upper parts of the building would be visible from Sleekburn Bank. However the presence of tall boundary planting and its location at the end of the terrace significantly well away from that road would greatly reduce the prominence of the garage and its visual impact from public viewpoints. Furthermore its position, set away from the north-south direction of Sleekburn Bank would not naturally tend to draw the eye. Whilst the finished level of the garage is unclear from the application, it would be subordinate in scale to the two storey main dwelling and its visual impact could be further mitigated if sited at a lower level compared with the house.
14. I conclude that the proposal would not result in harm to the character and appearance of the host dwelling and wider area. Accordingly it would be in keeping with Policies GP30 and H8 of the LP, the SPD and the Framework insofar as they seek to promote good design including for extensions to be subordinate in size and bulk to the existing house.

Conclusion

15. I have not found harm to the living conditions of neighbours, to occupiers of the appeal dwelling in terms of loss of garden space or to the character and appearance of the area. However, these factors do not overcome my negative findings relating to the living conditions of existing and future occupiers of the appeal dwelling in terms of outlook.
16. Consequently, having had regard to all other matters raised, including that there have been some letters supporting the development from local residents, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Roy Merrett

INSPECTOR