
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 14 November 2016

by R C Shrimplin MA(Cantab) DipArch RIBA FRTPI FCI Arb MCIL

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

Decision date: 28 November 2016

Appeal Reference: APP/Z2830/D/16/3159707

87B Larkhall Lane, Harpole, Northamptonshire NN7 4DF

- 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 J O'Grady against the decision of South Northamptonshire Council.
 - The application (reference S/2016/1648/FUL, dated 23 June 2016) was refused by notice dated 31 August 2016.
 - The development proposed is described in the application form as "part two storey, part single storey front, side and rear extensions".
-

Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for "part two storey, part single storey front, side and rear extensions", at 87B Larkhall Lane, Harpole, Northamptonshire NN7 4DF, in accordance with the terms of the application (reference S/2016/1648/FUL, dated 23 June 2016), subject to the following conditions.
 1. The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this decision.
 2. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved drawings:
 - drawing number 15/040/1A (As Existing);
 - drawing number 15/040/6 (As Proposed Floor Plans & Elevations).
 3. The materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of the development hereby permitted shall match those used in the existing building.

Main issue

2. The main issue to be determined in this appeal is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the host building and its surroundings.

Reasons

3. The appeal site lies at the edge of Harpole, to the east of the main part of the village, with access from a track that joins Larkhall Lane. Adjoining land is open and agricultural in character, with fields either side of the appeal site and at the rear, though the site is not within a Green Belt.

4. The existing house at 87B Larkhall Lane is a substantial dwelling in a good sized plot, conventional in design and constructed of brickwork under tiled roofs. It is now proposed to extend the house by the construction of various extensions to the front side and rear of the existing building, partly single storey and partly two storey. In design, the scheme would reflect the style of the existing building, with hipped roofs over a brickwork structure, though a large balcony, with a glass balustrade, would be created at first floor level on the rear elevation. In effect, a much larger dwellinghouse would be created.
5. Among other things, the 'National Planning Policy Framework' emphasises the aim of "requiring good design" in the broadest sense (notably at Section 7) and it points out the importance of creating an attractive streetscape and maintaining the overall quality of the area, recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside and conserving and enhancing the natural environment generally.
6. The South Northamptonshire Local Plan was adopted in 1997 and Policy EV1 deals with design considerations generally. Policy H17 deals with residential extensions more specifically, however. It also raises design considerations but, in addition, seeks to limit the scale of extensions to dwellings in restraint villages or in the open countryside, stating that they should "not exceed a fifty per cent increase by volume of the original dwelling ..." (Policy H17(V)).
7. The Council also publishes Supplementary Planning Documents that are material to the appeal, though, as "guidance" they do not have the same weight as the Policies in the Development Plan. Attention has been drawn to 'Residential Design in the Countryside Planning Guidance Notes', dating from 1998, and to the "leaflet" entitled 'Residential Extensions Supplementary Planning Guidance'.
8. The proposed extensions would continue the use of brickwork under hipped tiled roofs, for the basic structure, and the finished building would be in keeping with the original and with its surroundings. The Council has raised a particular concern about the inclusion of a balcony at first floor level on the rear elevation of the building but it would not be so out of character with the building as to justify an objection on design grounds. Nor would the balcony give rise to overlooking or any other planning objection.
9. It is noted that the Supplementary Planning Guidance on residential extensions includes some rather specific propositions, whereas the finished building as proposed would, in effect, create a new design. Even so, it would be acceptable in terms of its architecture and it would not be out of keeping with its surroundings in design terms.
10. More generally, the Council also raise concerns about the bulk of the finished building, by comparison with the original building and in the context of Policy H17 of the 'South Northamptonshire Local Plan'. There is a concern that "overlarge extensions in the countryside would effectively represent new residential development" (as expressed in the old 'Local Plan') but the Policy referred to long predates the 'National Planning Policy framework', which does not impose such severe constraints on house extensions in the countryside generally (outside the Green Belts). In any case, it has been pointed out that

some flexibility can be applied in interpreting the Policy and that each case needs to be determined on its own planning merits.

11. Although the appearance of the building would evidently be changed, its basic character (as a substantial dwelling at the edge of the village) would not be profoundly different and the existing building does not merit special protection. In this case, the finished house would not be unduly intrusive in its setting and it would not harm the character of its surroundings. The architectural design is acceptable in planning terms.
12. The appeal site lies at the edge of Harpole, a village that has a range of local services, and the contribution that the appeal scheme would make to the provision of residential accommodation in the locality, even though it would be limited, weighs in favour of the appeal. I have concluded that the proposed development would be acceptable in planning terms (notwithstanding the conflict with Policy H17(V) of the 'Local Plan', if strictly applied).
13. In short, I am persuaded that the scheme before me can properly be permitted, subject to conditions, and, although I have considered all the matters that have been raised in the representations, I have found nothing to cause me to alter my decision.
14. I have, however, also concluded that conditions are necessary, to define the planning permission and to ensure that quality is maintained. In imposing conditions, I have taken account of the conditions suggested by the Council in the usual way (without prejudice to their main arguments in the appeal).

Roger C Shrimplin

INSPECTOR