

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 15 November 2016

by Richard S Jones BA (Hons) BTP MRTPI

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

Decision date: 8 December 2016

Appeal Ref: APP/P1615/D/16/3156134

Beaconsfield, Hudnalls Loop Road, St. Briavels, Gloucestershire GL15 6SG

- 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 Ms Pennie Tilston against the decision of Forest of Dean District Council.
 - The application Ref P1671/15/FUL, dated 5 November 2015, was refused by notice dated 27 May 2016.
 - The development proposed is alterations to outbuildings to improve appearance and use of dwelling and garage.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary matters

2. I have been provided with a draft Statement of Common Ground. However, it has not been signed by either party. I have therefore not been able to take it into account for that purpose but I have had regard to its content in association with the appellant's appeal statement.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the development on the character and appearance of the existing dwelling and the surrounding area, with particular reference to the Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

Reasons

4. Although the appeal dwelling has been subject to a number of extensions, it is nevertheless attractive with reasonable proportions. The existing garage store is of no merit and appears disproportionately wide. Nevertheless it has a relatively low profile which minimises its presence in the wider landscape. It is also clearly a separate building which further breaks down the overall scale and massing within the site.
 5. Whilst the two gable elevations facing the lane would remain, the proposed extensions and alterations would fundamentally change the scale and appearance of the dwelling such that it would bear little resemblance to that of the existing. I accept that the resulting footprint would be similar to that of the combined existing buildings, however, the enlarged dwelling would envelop the detached garage store and would create one large and very wide and imposing building, which would detract from the character and appearance of the
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existing dwelling and would have a materially greater presence within the AONB landscape.

6. I appreciate that the dwelling benefits from a large site, however, I find that the appeal proposal would amount to a disproportionately large addition that would be out of keeping with the scale and design of the existing dwelling. This harm would not be materially alleviated by addressing the orientation of the front door.
7. I accept that the elevation facing the lane is well set back and would benefit from a good degree of screening, particularly in the summer months, and that the most visible eastern elevation would remain unchanged. However, the rear of the building is exposed and faces out onto open countryside from an elevated position. Moreover, the appellant's view that the house is not prominently sited is not, by itself, a good argument in favour of permission; such permissions could be granted too often, to the overall detriment of the character of an area. This is particularly so in AONB's which, as explained in paragraph 115 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework), has the highest status of protection in relation to landscape and scenic beauty.
8. Reference is made to a previously approved scheme at this site. In this regard, I note from the Council's Officer report that the most recent approval¹ for alterations to the existing garage/outbuildings, involving partial demolition, was approved in January 2011. I have no evidence to suggest that this permission or any other has been implemented and represents a lawful fallback position. Therefore, although this approval remains a material consideration, the weight I am able to attach to it is reduced.
9. In any case, the plans I have been given for planning application reference P0096/05, which was subsequently renewed and the subject of the above minor amendment approval, show a scheme which is materially lower and of less mass, even though the width maybe comparable. The appellant states that the height difference is no more than one metre but I have no agreed measurements to confirm this and in my view the appeal scheme would have a materially greater impact than the previously approved scheme. Although I agree that the previously approved scheme has a rather plain elongated frontage, nevertheless, the primacy of the original dwelling would have remained largely evident.
10. I was able to view the ongoing building works at the neighbouring property known as Rodmar and do not disagree that the development taking place is more conspicuous from the public road than the appeal property. Nevertheless, the appeal building would be viewed in the landscape as a single very wide expanse of building whereas Rodmar is broken up into two single entities. Moreover, the Council's reason for refusal refers to the serious detriment to the character and appearance of the existing dwelling, not just the AONB and I agree with these findings.
11. The plans I have been provided for Windward House shows a large contemporary extension, however, unlike the appeal proposal, the primacy of the original dwelling remains largely intact. Similarly, the plans for Rocks Bungalow show an extension which is subservient to the original dwelling. Whilst I have been referred to other approvals at properties including Cherry

¹ Planning application reference: P0039/11/NONMAT

Hill House, Cockshoot Hill and Melrose Cottage, I am not aware of the full details and precise circumstances of those approvals so I cannot be certain that the circumstances are the same. In any case, I have determined the appeal on its own merits.

12. Although it is submitted that the design conforms completely with the pre-application advice received, this does not correspond with the Council's Officer report which states that some revisions were made but the scale and design remained unacceptable. In any case, pre-application advice is normally given without prejudice and cannot pre-determine the outcome of a subsequent application, which must take account of all material factors.
13. I have considered carefully the letters submitted in support of the appeal including that of the Parish Council, but the matters raised do not outweigh my concerns set out above.
14. I therefore conclude that the proposal would result in unacceptable harm to the character and appearance of the existing dwelling and would not conserve the landscape and scenic beauty of the AONB. Accordingly, the proposal would be contrary to: Policy CSP.1 of the Forest of Dean District Council Core Strategy Adopted Version, which states, amongst other matters, that the design and construction of new development must take into account important characteristics of the environment and conserve, preserve or otherwise respect them in a manner that maintains or enhances their contribution to the environment, including their wider context. In achieving the above, a number of factors are to be considered, including the effect of the proposal on the landscape, including AONB's. The proposal would also be contrary to the Forest of Dean Residential Design Guide, Alterations and Extensions, a guide for householders, which advises that proposals do not dominate the original building. It therefore follows that I also find conflict with the above stated paragraph of the Framework, which requires that I give great weight to conserving the landscape and scenic beauty of AONB's.

Conclusion

15. For these reasons, and taking all other matters into consideration, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Richard S Jones

Inspector