
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 6 December 2016

by Louise Nurser BA (Hons) Dip UP MRTPI

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

Decision date: 22nd December 2016

Appeal Ref: APP/W0340/D/16/3159526

Woodlands, Cods Hill, Beenham, Reading, Berkshire RG7 5QG

- 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 Peter Fane against the decision of West Berkshire Council.
 - The application Ref 16/01269/HOUSE, dated 6 May 2016, was refused by notice dated 3 August 2016.
 - The development proposed is living room extension with en-suite bathroom and dressing room above.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for living room extension with en-suite bathroom and dressing room above at Woodlands, Cods Hill, Beenham, Reading, Berkshire RG7 5QG in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref 16/01269/HOUSE, dated 16 May 2016, and the plans submitted with it, subject to the following conditions:
 - 1) The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than 3 years from the date of this decision.
 - 2) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: SP1 as amended, SP3, and SP4.
 - 3) The external surfaces of the development hereby permitted shall be constructed in materials which shall match those used in the existing building.
 - 4) No site clearance, preparatory work or development shall take place until a scheme for the protection of the retained trees (the tree protection plan) and the appropriate working methods (the arboricultural method statement) in accordance with paragraphs 5.5 and 6.1 of British Standard BS 5837: Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction - Recommendations (or in an equivalent British Standard if replaced) shall have been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The scheme for the protection of the retained trees shall be carried out as approved.

In this condition "retained tree" means an existing tree which is to be retained in accordance with the approved plans and particulars.

Background and Main Issue

2. The host property has been significantly enlarged since it was built in the 1950s. Consequently, the original dwelling is considered to have been subsumed¹ by the extensions. I am aware that following the grant of planning permission for the most recent ground floor extension that the Council advised that it would be unlikely that permission would be granted for further extensions. However, I must consider the proposed development on the basis of the scheme before me. Therefore, the main issue in this case is the effect of the proposed extension on the character and appearance of the host dwelling and the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

Reasons

3. The host property is a substantial two storey hipped roof house which has been substantially extended. It is set well back from Cods Hill within large mature landscaped gardens framed by woodland within the North Wessex Downs AONB.
4. The proposal would provide for an extended living room downstairs and a dressing room and en suite upstairs with a balcony and spiral staircase which would lead to the existing outdoor swimming pool which is located to the rear of the property.
5. Policy ENV 24 of West Berkshire District Local Plan 1991-2006 (Saved Policies) 2007 (WBDLP), requires extensions within the open countryside not to have a materially greater impact, than the existing dwelling, on the rural character of the area. It also requires that the proposed development should not result in an extended dwelling disproportionate in size to the original. This policy is supported by the Replacement Dwellings and Extension to Dwellings in the Countryside Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) July 2004. This provides guidelines to consider whether extensions are appropriate, including the use of percentages as a means of indicating what would be considered to be disproportionate.
6. The proposed development together with the previous extensions to the original property would result in an increase in floorspace of around 168%. This would almost double the size of the original dwelling, which has already been subsumed by the previous extensions, and would according to the SPG be clearly disproportionate to the original dwelling. However, the original development has already been substantially altered. Therefore, in line with the objective of Saved Policy ENV24 which remains consistent with the Framework and emerging policy, I have considered the proposed development in the context of the impact on the character and appearance of the host property and whether it would result in an overdevelopment of the site with a consequential adverse impact on the wider rural character and appearance of the AONB.
7. The host property is set within attractive grounds whose established trees and shrubs would partially screen and soften the impact of the proposed extension. In addition, as the ridge line of the roof would be lower than that of the main house, and the front elevation would be set back, and that matching materials would be used in its construction, the extension would be seen as subservient

¹ Reason for refusal

to the existing host property. Moreover, due to the generous sized gardens the proposed development would not appear as overdevelopment of the site. Consequently, in the context of its wooded setting and landscaped gardens it would have no materially greater impact on the rural character of the area than the existing property.

8. Therefore, on balance, taking into account the setting of the host property, the screening of the extension and that it has been designed to be subservient to the existing dwelling I conclude that the proposed development would not result in any harm to the character or appearance of the property, nor to the character or appearance of the AONB. In coming to this conclusion I have taken into account Paragraph 115 of the Framework to give great weight to conserving the landscape and scenic beauty of the AONB.
9. As such the proposed extension would not adversely affect the character and appearance of the AONB in line with Policy ENV24 of the LP, emerging Policy C6- Submission Housing Site Allocations DPD West Berkshire Council November 2015, and Policies CS19, and ADPP5, of the West Berkshire Core Strategy (2006-2026). The proposed development would therefore accord with the environmental aspect of sustainable development.
10. I note that the Council is concerned that were the proposed development to be replicated elsewhere that there would be a cumulative adverse visual impact on the AONB and the rural areas. However, I have carefully considered the appeal on the basis of the particular circumstances before me and have concluded, on balance, that the proposal would accord with existing and emerging policies and the objective of the Framework. Evidently, other proposed developments would be considered on the basis of the particular circumstances of each case. As such, I do not consider that a precedent would be set in my allowing this appeal.

Conditions

11. I have imposed conditions relating to the commencement of development and the details of the approved plans for the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning. A condition requiring that materials match those of the existing dwelling is necessary to ensure a satisfactory appearance. The Council has suggested two further conditions in the event that the appeal is allowed relating to the protection of trees in accordance with the objectives of the Framework and Policies CS14, CS18 and CS19 of the West Berkshire Core Strategy 2006-2026. In the interests of clarity I have amended and merged the two conditions.

Conclusion

12. For the reasons given above the appeal should be allowed.

L. Nurser

INSPECTOR