

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 13 February 2017

by Les Greenwood MRTPI

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

Decision date: 10 March 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/Y9507/D/16/3165058

North Lodge, Sunwood Lane, Buriton, Petersfield GU31 5RJ

- 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 Reverend P W Mason against the decision of the South Downs National Park Authority.
 - The application Ref SDNP/16/03538/HOUS was refused by notice dated 14 October 2016.
 - The development proposed is alterations and pitched roof extensions.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main issues

2. The main issues are the effects of the proposal on:
 - i) the character and appearance of the building and the local area and the landscape of the National Park; and
 - ii) the maintenance of a mixed supply of dwelling sizes in the countryside.

Reasons

Character, appearance and landscape

3. North Lodge is a 2 storey, late Victorian detached house set in an isolated position on a steeply sloping, elevated site in the National Park. It is an individually designed building of some character, with architectural features including timber framing and feature gables. The proposal includes a 2 storey side extension and a single storey rear extension. It would rationalise and improve the accommodation including provision of a third bedroom upstairs and a fourth, more accessible bedroom downstairs, plus a unified ground floor level and access ramp. The existing detached garage would be replaced by an attached, flat roofed single garage with a dummy pitched roof to 2 sides, projecting slightly forward of the house.
 4. The Council's Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) *Extending Your Home: Design Guide for Residential Extensions* advises that extensions should always appear smaller in mass and scale than the main building, harmonising with its composition. In this case, the massing and scale of the proposed 2 storey side extension plus the position and design of the new garage would challenge the
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visual dominance and character of the existing house, with its modest proportions and intricate design.

5. This impact would be accentuated by the use of modern coloured cladding, contrasting with the materials used in the existing house and accentuating the design clash between the 2 elements. I recognise that contemporary style extensions can often be built onto older buildings, but it is important that such extensions do not overwhelm the character and architectural interest of the original building, as would be the case here.
6. I find no objection to the rear extension, which would be lower in height and smaller in bulk, replacing an existing extension. The Council raises no objection in terms of the impact on national park purposes. I likewise find that there would be no undue harm to the wider landscape of the Park.
7. I nevertheless conclude that the proposal would unacceptably harm the character and appearance of the house and the local area. It therefore conflicts with the aims of Joint Core Strategy Policy CP29, East Hampshire District Local Plan Second Review (LP) Policy HE2 and the SPG, to ensure that extensions take account of the design, scale and character of the building, respecting local character, identity and context. It also conflicts with the National Planning Policy Framework's emphasis on securing high quality design that reinforces local distinctiveness.

Mixed supply of housing

8. LP Policy H16 aims to restrict the size of additions to dwellings in the countryside, to help maintain a variety of dwelling types and sizes. This is reasonably justified on the basis that the number of such rural properties tends to remain fairly static and there is pressure to increase their size over time, in conflict with housing needs surveys identifying a need for smaller, less expensive accommodation. This aim is broadly in line with the Framework's emphasis on delivering a wide choice of homes.
9. Policy H16 identifies 4 bands of property sizes and applies different criteria to each. The appeal property falls within the 2nd band, from 67 to 266 sqm floorspace, where extensions should not increase the size of the original dwelling by more than 50%. The exact amount of increase here is disputed. The Council cites an increase of 134% and the appellant just 83%. I find the appellant's calculation, which includes the long-standing existing garage as part of the baseline figure, to be reasonable and convincing - though the percentage increase would be a bit higher if a newer detached summerhouse is also included as part of the increase. Even on the appellant's figures, however, the proposal clearly conflicts with Policy H16.
10. I therefore need to consider whether there are other material considerations that would override this conflict with the development plan. The appellant has cited a number of other appeal decisions where increases of a similar scale have been allowed¹. In common with these cases, the house would remain in the very wide 67 to 266 sqm floorspace band in Policy H16 and is already valued to be above any low-cost housing market segment.

¹ APP/M1710/D/13/2196250, APP/M1710/D/09/2113845, APP/Y9507/D/15/3049278

11. On the other hand, in those other appeal cases the number of bedrooms would stay the same, whereas this proposal would double the number from 2 to 4. I have no doubt that the proposal would substantially increase the size of the house and would thereby contribute to the gradual trend towards larger properties in the countryside that the policy seeks to control. I am not convinced that the policy should be overridden just because the property is not low-cost and would still be less than 266 sqm.
12. In the terms of this particular issue, I find insufficient material considerations to justify overriding adopted development plan policy. I conclude that the proposal would detract from the maintenance of a mixed supply of dwelling sizes in the countryside, in conflict with LP Policy H16 and the Framework.

Other matters

13. The proposal would also substantially improve the existing, poorly laid out accommodation. The appellant is caring for a person with disabilities and has a reasonable need to improve the house in order to make this easier. In balancing the planning issues in this case, I must have due regard to the need to advance equality of opportunity to people with physical or mental impairments that have a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. I consider that in this case, this need is sufficient to outweigh my concerns in regard to the second main issue, but not the first. I am not convinced that the design of this proposal is justified in order to meet the identified need.

Conclusion

14. Having considered all matters raised, I find that my concerns in relation to the first main issue are sufficiently compelling for me to conclude that the appeal should not succeed.

Les Greenwood

INSPECTOR