

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 23 March 2017

by Martin H Seddon BSc DipTP MPhil MRTPI

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

Decision date: 6th April 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/N0410/D/17/3167290

Brackenberry, 12 Beech Way, Gerrards Cross, SL9 8BL

- 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 Wright against the decision of South Bucks District Council.
 - The application Ref: 16/01699/FUL was refused by notice dated 8 November 2016.
 - The development proposed is: two storey front and rear extensions, part single storey, part two storey rear extension and loft conversion incorporating rear dormer windows.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The Council has raised no objection to the proposal in terms of its effect on the living conditions of neighbours. I see no reason to disagree, subject to the use of obscure glazing for the first-floor windows serving the en-suite bathrooms in the western elevation. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development upon the character and appearance of the street scene.

Reasons

3. No.12 Beech Way is a large detached dwelling set within spacious grounds. It is part of a row of detached dwellings of differing age and design and is within a Residential Area of Exceptional Character as defined by the South Bucks District Local Plan. The front elevation of the dwelling has asymmetry in design because of the sloping roof over a pair of integral garages. At the site inspection, it was clear from viewing the inside of the building that the design of the dwelling partly reduces the ceiling heights at first floor level. Although this adds character to the interior of the property, it does restrict the way in which rooms may be furnished.
4. The proposed extensions would increase the height of the dwelling by around 0.9m. The front elevation would have increased symmetry in design though the addition of gabled projections at either side. The Hillcrest Way area/Woodhill Avenue has been identified as an Area of Special Character in the Council's *Townscape Character Study*, due to its high-quality townscape and landscape qualities. It is considered sensitive to new development resulting from its uniform pattern of landscaped plots, associated with mature vegetation and characteristic variety of individual architect designed houses.
5. The proposal would significantly alter the appearance of the front elevation of the building. The appellant refers to "paragraph 8.43 of the Local Plan" which

indicates that it is not intended to stifle imaginative or innovative design through the application of rigid rules and that it may not always be appropriate for the design of a new building to imitate the elevational features of existing buildings. However, I consider that the extensions proposed to the front elevation would be detrimental to the character and appearance of the building and street scene within this sensitive area of exceptional character.

6. Although the dwelling is set back from Beech Waye, the increase in height and introduction of the gables would substantially increase its prominence in the street scene. The *Townscape Character Study* refers to the harm to the special character of the area resulting from extensions which reduce the space between dwellings. The separation distance between the flank walls of the dwelling and its boundaries with neighbours at either side would be unaltered at ground floor level. However, the increase in mass at first floor level next to No.14 Beech Waye would reduce the gap between the two dwellings to the detriment of the existing sense of spaciousness.
7. I consider that the proposal would have an adverse effect on the exceptional character of the Woodhill Estate, contrary to District Local Plan policy H10. The extensions would fail to harmonise with the existing building in terms of scale, height, form, and design, contrary to District Local Plan policies H11 and EP3.

Other Considerations

8. The appellant has referred to sustainability and design policies in the National Planning Policy Framework. The proposal would have social benefits through increasing accommodation, limited economic benefits from employment when under construction, and would make fuller use of the land. However, the environmental dimension of sustainability also must be considered. I find that the potential benefits from the proposal would not outweigh the harm to the area of exceptional character that is identified above.

Conclusion

9. I have taken all other matters raised into account. For the reasons given above the appeal is dismissed.

Martin H Seddon

INSPECTOR