

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 18 April 2017

by Chris Couper BA (Hons) DiP TP MRTPI

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

Decision date: 10th May 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/K0425/D/17/3169424

Allwood, Perks Lane, Prestwood, Buckinghamshire HP16 0JG

- 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 Andrew Metcalfe against the decision of Wycombe District Council.
 - The application Ref 16/07532/FUL, dated 24 August 2016, was refused by notice dated 25 November 2016.
 - The development proposed is described as a 'single storey front extension and conversion of garage to habitable'.
-

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural matter

2. Although the Council's officer report states that the scheme would have an adverse impact on the rural amenities of the Green Belt, it continues that it would be an 'appropriate development' which would not harm the Green Belt's openness.
3. Having regard to the decision notice, which does not allege Green Belt harm, and given the relatively modest scale of this proposal and previous extensions relative to the original building, I have no reason to conclude that the scheme would be a disproportionate addition. Consequently, it would not be inappropriate development, as defined by the National Planning Policy Framework ('Framework'). I have therefore not considered this matter any further in my decision.

Main Issues

4. The main issues are the effect of the proposal on i) the character and appearance of the host property and the area, including the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty; and ii) the living conditions at nos. 7 and 8 Perks Lane, with particular regard to the outlook from those properties and the availability of light within them.
-

Reasons

Character and appearance

5. This part of Perks Lane loosely follows the valley bottom, with the dwellings arranged in a linear fashion along it. They are typically set back from, and often elevated above, the narrow lane, with rising agricultural land beyond. There is considerable variety in terms of the form, style and appearance of the dwellings. The surroundings are characterised by a mix of undulating fields and areas of woodland, together with built development, and form part of the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty ('AONB').
6. Allwood is a detached, brick-faced dwelling, which is set back from the road and roughly aligns with its neighbours. To the front, it has a long flat-roofed dormer window in its main ridged roof, and a low level, single storey projection with an outdoor terrace on its flat roof. The proposed extension would be sited on part of that terrace, and would project forward of it where there is currently a discrete canopy over the garage.
7. The extension would have a significant rectilinear bulk, which would project forward of the main two storey part of the host property, in a prominent, elevated position on its front elevation. Whilst I have noted Allwood's existing flat roofs, the extension's form would contrast with its principally pitched roof above ground floor level. The scheme's design, and contrasting facing materials of dark grey powder coated timber cladding, would give it a contemporary feel, but seen together with the existing dwelling, the resultant building would have a rather eclectic appearance. Although the style of nearby properties is varied, I did not observe others in the streetscene with such a contrasting form and appearance on a single building as would be the case here.
8. The harm that would cause would be visible from Perks Lane to the front, as well as when approaching along the lane from the east, where the extension's elevated, flat-roofed, projecting form would jar with nearby dwellings which have principally sloping roofs facing the highway. Applying the Chilterns Design Guide, the scheme would not respond appropriately to the scale and form of its neighbours. Whilst tall conifers on the boundary with the adjacent flats at nos. 7 and 8 Perks Lane would screen the development in views from the west, should they be removed the extension would also be prominent and discordant when approaching along Perks Lane from that direction.
9. For those reasons the scheme would conflict with policies H17 (including Appendix 4) and G3 of the Wycombe District Local Plan to 2011 (2007) ('LP'), and policy CS 19 of the Wycombe Core Strategy 2008 ('WCS'). They require, in broad terms and amongst other things, that development should not have an adverse effect on the character and appearance of the original property or the area; that it be carefully assimilated into its context by reference to matters such as scale, bulk and form; and that extensions are visually integrated with the existing building.
10. The Framework states at paragraph 115 that Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty have the highest status of protection in relation to landscape and scenic beauty, and that great weight should be given to their conservation. Policy L1 of the LP sets out that within the AONB the design of development should be in sympathy with the local landscape and should not damage the character and

appearance of the area. WCS policy CS 17 sets out that the AONB should be conserved. Given my conclusions above, the scheme would also result in a limited conflict with those policies, although the harm caused would be very localised, and slight relative to the much more extensive AONB.

Living conditions

11. The ground floor flat at no. 7 and the first floor flat at no. 8 contain side-facing windows with a restricted outlook due to the nearby presence of the appeal dwelling, and boundary treatment including the conifers. However, given the extension's limited height relative to the height of no. 8's side windows, and its flat-roofed form, even if the conifers were to be removed, it would not have a significant impact on the outlook from the closest of those windows. The other window in no. 8's side elevation is further from the proposed extension and would be even less affected. For similar reasons, the scheme would not result in a significant loss of light to the room those windows serve.
12. Turning to no. 7, it has 3 side-facing ground floor windows serving a kitchen/lounge. The central of those is the largest and has an aspect towards Allwood's gable and the boundary fence rather than towards the site of the proposed extension. There is also a small window on the opposite side of that room. The outlook from the front most of the kitchen/lounge's side-facing windows is very limited partly due to the conifers. If they were to be removed, the extension would be clearly visible from that window. However, as the outlook from the other windows in the kitchen/lounge would be largely unaffected by this scheme, even then there would not be a significant sense of enclosure or overbearance within that room. From the evidence before me, and for similar reasons, I am satisfied that the scheme would not result in poor living conditions in no. 7 due to limited natural light.
13. Consequently, the proposal would not have a significant effect on the living conditions at nos. 7 and 8. On this matter it would not conflict with those parts of LP policies H17 (including Appendix 4), G3 and G8, and WCS policy CS 19 which require sympathetic design with an appropriate private environment, which safeguards amenity with regard to issues such as light availability, outlook and visual intrusion. Given that this is not a rear extension, the 60 and 45 degree guidelines in Appendix 4 do not apply. Additionally, the scheme would not conflict with the Framework's requirement to secure a good standard of amenity for all occupiers.

Conclusions

14. I note that no objections were raised by third parties. However, for the above reasons, the scheme would harm the character and appearance of the host property and this part of the Perks Lane streetscene. That in turn would result in limited harm to the landscape and scenic beauty of the AONB. Consequently, although I have found that the proposal would not cause significant harm to the living conditions at nos. 7 and 8 Perks Lane, having regard to all other matters raised, the appeal is dismissed.

Chris Couper

INSPECTOR