
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 27 April 2017

by L Gibbons BA (Hons) MRTPI

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

Decision date: 12 May 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/X0360/D/17/3168223

12 Quantock Close, Charvil, Reading, Berkshire, RG10 9QQ

- 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 Mrs Emma Bowden against the decision of Wokingham Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 163141, dated 11 November 2016, was refused by notice dated 23 December 2016.
 - The development proposed is a first floor side extension for bedroom and en-suite bathroom.
-

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issues are:
 - i) The effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of No 12 Quantock Close and the surrounding area, and;
 - ii) The effect of the proposed development on protected species.

Reasons

Character and appearance

3. The appeal site is within a residential area and the houses in Quantock Close are of a similar design. Features include partial timber elevations and a pitched roof. Although some houses have car ports and single storey extensions, the similarities between the properties are very recognisable and is a key characteristic of the street. There is a clear pattern to the built form locally with a repeated building type. No 12 has a single storey side extension although the overall character of the house is predominantly the same as the others in the Close. No 12 is located on the corner of Quantock Close and Wenlock Edge and is prominent in the street scene from a number of viewpoints along these roads.
 4. The proposal is for a first floor side extension with materials to match that of the main house. I have been referred to the Council's Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) 2012. This refers to alterations and extensions responding positively to the context, maintaining or enhancing the street scene and local character. The scale and bulk of the proposed extension would be seen as a very significant addition to the street scene. This would be
-

the case even with the open space to the pavement along Wenlock Edge. It would not appear as a subservient addition to the house. Although the design of the roof follows that of the original house, the ridge of the roof of the extension would be as high as the existing roof. This would create an unbalanced appearance to the existing house and the general rhythm of the dwellings. The appellant proposes a condition relating to the retention and enhancement of planting. However, this would not be sufficient to mitigate the effect of the extension which would be visible at the first storey.

5. I have been referred to No 11 Quantock Close which has a first floor side extension. This is smaller in scale than the proposal at No 12 and is not as wide as that proposed in the scheme before me. I have also been referred to other extended properties within the area. However, I have not been provided with the details which led to them being acceptable or indeed whether they have planning permission. I cannot be sure that they represent a direct parallel to the appeal proposal. In any case I have determined the appeal on its own merits.
6. For the reasons given above, I conclude that the proposed development would cause harm to the character and appearance of No 12 Quantock Close and the surrounding area. It would be in conflict with Policies CP1 and CP3 of the Wokingham Core Strategy (CS) 2010. These amongst other things seek new development that maintain or enhance the high quality of the environment, and are of an appropriate scale of activity, mass, layout, built form, height, materials and character together with a high quality of design. It would be contrary to the SPD.

Protected species

7. The Council raise concerns about the lack of information relating to the possibility for bats using the roof as a roost. Twyford Gravel Pits Local Wildlife Site is a potential foraging area that is close by, and information based on modelling to identify bat roosts is provided. A number of bat roosts have been found in close proximity to the appeal site. Based on the evidence before me there is a reasonable likelihood of protected species being present on or near the site. The alterations would mean some work to the original roof and I consider there is a risk that protected species may be adversely affected by the proposal.
8. The explanatory text of Policy TB23 of the Managing Development Delivery Local Plan (LP) 2014 sets out that where the nature and location of a development is such that nature conservation impacts may be significant, surveys and report should be prepared. These should include existing biodiversity interests and how the development is expected to impact on these. A preliminary bat survey has not been provided.
9. I have considered whether a condition could be imposed relating to a potential process should evidence of bats be found during the construction of the extension. The appellant refers to examples of planning applications within Charvil which have been dealt with in this way. However, I cannot be certain that any bat population would have not already been negatively affected once works have commenced. The proposal would therefore be contrary to Policies CP3 and CP7 of the CS, and Policy TB23 of the LP. These amongst other things seek new development that can put in place mitigation measures, and maintain

or enhance the ability of the site to support fauna and flora including protected species.

Other matters

10. The Council do not object to the proposal in terms of its effect on the living conditions of adjoining occupiers or on parking and highway safety. Based on the evidence before me, I see no reason to disagree with these matters. However, this is not sufficient to justify the appeal proposal.
11. The appellant refers to concerns about the Council's dealing with the planning application process, the purchase of amenity land, and the reason for refusal relating to bats. However, the Council's procedures in these respects are not primarily before me as part of my consideration of this appeal, but are matters for the Council in the first instance.

Conclusion

12. I acknowledge that the proposal would provide additional accommodation for the family and that they are seeking to stay within the area. I note the appellant's concerns that there are competing needs within society in terms of sustainable development. However, the CS seeks development that should enhance the overall sustainability through minimising impact on the environment. The harm caused to the character and appearance of the main dwelling and the surrounding area would outweigh the benefits of the proposal, and it would not enhance overall sustainability.
13. For the above reasons and having regard to all other matters raised including the lack of objection from neighbours, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

L Gibbons

INSPECTOR