
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 20 June 2017

by Amanda Blicq BSc (Hons) MA CMLI

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

Decision date: 30 June 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/X0360/W/17/3170794
36 Sandhurst Road, Wokingham RG40 3JD

- 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 Rendle against the decision of Wokingham Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 162590, dated 15 September 2016, was refused by notice dated 16 December 2016.
 - The development proposed is side first floor extension with front gable and lean to roof.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for side first floor extension with front gable and lean to roof at 36 Sandhurst Road, Wokingham RG40 3JD in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref 162590 , dated 15 September 2016, 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: Dwgs. 01; 02; 03; 04.
 - 3) None of the development hereby permitted shall take place until samples of all external facing materials, and the full extent of their use, have been submitted to and approved by the local planning authority in writing. The relevant works shall be carried out in accordance with the approved sample details.
 - 4) The extension hereby permitted shall not be occupied until all first floor windows on the development's north-west elevation have been fitted with obscured glazing, and no part of those windows that is less than 1.7 metres above the floor of the room in which it is installed shall be capable of being opened. Details of the type of obscured glazing shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority before the window is installed and once installed, the obscured glazing shall be retained thereafter.

Procedural Matters

2. I have used the name of the appellant given on the application form in the heading above. For brevity I have also used the description of development given on the application form.

3. The evidence before me indicates that although one of the reasons for refusal was related to the absence of sufficient ecological information, this has subsequently been provided. As the Council has indicated that they are satisfied that this evidence addresses that reason for refusal¹ I have not referred to it as a main issue or in my reasoning.

Main Issue

4. The main issue is the effect of the development on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

5. Number 36 Sandhurst Road (No 36) is a large detached dwelling set back from the road, within a series of other detached and semi-detached dwellings. Although there is a consistent building line and a general conformity in the use of building materials, I noted the dwellings themselves vary in style, form and separation distances. They are also well-screened by mature roadside and garden vegetation. Although No 36 is more visible from the road than its neighbours, as the boundary treatment is less mature, it is partially screened from the road from the north-west by an ancillary building in the front garden of 34 Sandhurst Road (No 34).
6. Number 36's plot is conspicuously wider than other plots in the vicinity, and there is also generous lateral separation with No 34 along the north-western plot boundary. This separation distance appears anomalous in the context of the layout of neighbouring dwellings and is further enhanced by the positioning of the dwelling's attached garage along this elevation. The separation and garage allow brief glimpsed views across the plot to the amenity areas at the rear.
7. The development would comprise a first floor extension located over the attached garage, and achieved through the extension of the host dwelling's ridgeline. Its overall form would reflect and be consistent with, the form and articulation of the host dwelling.
8. The SPD² states that alterations and extensions should be well designed, contribute positively to the original building and local character, and relate well to neighbouring properties. It also states that a key consideration is subservience to the form and scale of the original building.
9. I appreciate that the extension would not appear subservient to the host dwelling. However, I agree with the appellant that the dimensions of this particular plot and separation with No 34 allow for a wider front elevation without appearing incongruous in the street scene. Furthermore, the extension would not widen the host dwelling's footprint, and would blend in with the existing variety of style, form and design seen in nearby buildings.
10. I acknowledge that the existing glimpsed view to the rear of the plot would be obstructed, but it would be reduced in width by some 3- 4 metres at first floor level, leaving the existing gap at ground floor level, of more than 10 metres, unchanged. I also noted that dwellings to the east of No 36 have limited lateral separation. By comparison, the visual separation of Nos 34 and 36

¹ Council Statement, Section 6

² Wokingham Borough Council, Borough Design Guide, June 2012

would remain as a distinct and distinctive break in the building pattern. As such, I consider the extension, in principle, would not have an adverse effect on the character and appearance of the area, subject to the materials used.

11. The Council has raised a concern in relation to the extension's rendered finish. I agree with the Council that this would highlight the extension as an addition to the host dwelling and furthermore, the proposed configuration of brick and rendered finish³ on the dwelling's external envelope would appear rather random. Notwithstanding that I have not found harm in relation to the principle of development, I am of the opinion that the resultant dwelling should demonstrate some consistency with building materials used on nearby dwellings, as well as the host dwelling. The evidence before me indicates that the appellant is willing to accept a condition that the external finish should match the existing, if the appeal is allowed.
12. Consequently, I disagree with the Council that the development would unbalance a regular pattern to the street form as the underlying building pattern has inconsistency in separation and building style. The development would relate well in design and form to other dwellings on Sandhurst Road, and would use appropriate materials. As such, I am not satisfied that the extension would be detrimental to the character and appearance of the area.
13. In the light of the above, I find no conflict with the SPG's guidance. Nor would the development be contrary to Policy CP1 of the Local Plan⁴ (LP) which requires development to maintain or enhance the high quality of the environment, or the design aims of LP Policy CP3.

Conditions

14. I have considered the conditions put forward by the Council against the requirements of the national Planning Practice Guidance and the Framework. In respect of the plans, I have imposed a condition specifying the drawings upon which I have based this appeal, as this provides certainty.
15. I have also imposed a condition in respect of the materials to be used on external surfaces to ensure that the Council is able to exercise some control over the appearance of the development in the interests of the character and appearance of the area. I have imposed this as a pre-commencement condition as it is required in order to make the development acceptable.
16. I have also imposed a condition requiring first floor windows on the development's north-western elevation to be obscure glazed and to have fixed lights below a specified height. This is to ensure there is no overlooking for occupiers of the neighbouring dwelling.
17. As the Council considers that the submitted bat survey demonstrates that the development is unlikely to adversely affect local bat populations, I am not satisfied that the suggested informative would be a proportionate imposition. In any case, bats are a protected species and if they or their roosts were found to be present during the construction work, other legislation would offer protection and guidance.

³ Dwg. 04

⁴ Wokingham Borough Council, Core Strategy, adopted January 2010

Conclusion

18. For the reasons given above and taking all matters into account, I conclude that the development would not be contrary to the relevant policies of the Council's Local Plan and that therefore the appeal should be allowed.

Amanda Blicq

INSPECTOR