

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 3 July 2017

by John D Allan BA(Hons) BTP MRTPI

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

Decision date: 13th July 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/X0360/D/17/3174373

15 Ridgeway, Wargrave, RG10 8AS

- 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 & Mrs C Leppard against the decision of Wokingham Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 163430, dated 5 December 2016, was refused by notice dated 2 February 2017.
 - The development proposed is the erection of two-storey extension to side and front and garden store at side.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matter

2. The appellants produced a Daylight Bat Survey specifically for the appeal. In the interest of natural justice the Council was given the opportunity to comment on the report, and those made have been taken into account in my decision.

Main Issues

3. The main issues are the effects of the proposal on: - (i) the character and appearance of 15 Ridgeway and the wider area, and (ii) protected species.

Reasons

Character and Appearance

4. The appeal property is a two-storey detached dwelling set within the core of a fairly large residential estate dating from around the 1980s. The area comprises a mix of dwelling types, often with small groups of repeated house designs. I saw however that many have been altered in a variety of ways beyond their original forms such that, despite a regular palette of materials, I saw no particular regimentation to the appearance of the street scene that was of importance to the area's overall character.
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5. No 15 is one of a row of four similar properties (Nos 9, 11, 15 and 17) along this side of Ridgeway. Each has a gabled roof parallel to the road with an attached garage to one side. However, there was a slight variation to their forward building lines in relation to each other as well as to the arrangement of their single-storey lean-to projections to the front. In addition I saw that No 11 had been extended at first floor above the garage. As such I could detect no particular visual bond between them that was of any significance to the wider character of the area. Furthermore, there is a marked shift in dwelling type beyond this group with three gable fronted properties facing Ridgeway at Nos 3, 5 and 7, again with some variation between each that appeared to be the result of later modifications. Still further variety to the street scene was provided by a number of well-spaced, gabled end elevations to properties on the opposite side of Ridgeway, each positioned on corner plots at the entrance to short lengths of cul-de-sacs.
6. The proposal includes extending over the garage at first floor level and slightly forward of the dwelling with a fairly large gable feature that would span across part of the existing front elevation. The Council is concerned that this part of the proposal would fail to be subservient to the original dwelling and that the forward gable projection would be bulky and prominent within the street scene.
7. The Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) June 2012 deals with alterations and extensions to buildings at its section 4.11. It says that they should: - be well designed; respond positively to the original building; contribute positively to the local character; and relate well to neighbouring properties. It goes on to say that alterations or extensions should be clearly subservient to the form and scale of the original building in most situations but it recognises also that there may be exceptions where it is more appropriate to design a seamless continuation.
8. In this case the proposal would simply project the existing scale and form of the dwelling sideways, over the garage, and with a further forward projection in the form of the gable. There is no question that the extension would not be subservient to the original dwelling. However, the example at No 11 shows how a seamless extension can work well in this location without harm to the established pattern of development. The materials proposed at No 15 would match the existing, as would the window pattern, eaves and ridge lines. The resulting building would appear as a remodelled version of the existing, but with a wholly integrated design that would be appropriately in scale compared with others along Ridgeway and comfortable on its plot. Its gabled form would merely reflect other similar features that are very prominent within the street scene without appearing uncharacteristic or alien.
9. The SPD advises that front extensions should generally be no more than one storey in height and only where the building is well set back from the street frontage in a large plot. In this case, whilst the dwelling does not sit within an especially large plot, the space retained between Nos 15 and 11 would be acceptable and the front extension would remain reasonably well set back from the street frontage, projecting around just 1m in front of the dwelling's existing forward building line. Although this element of the proposal would project forward of both neighbouring dwellings, this would only be marginal. Furthermore, this would merely reflect the subtle changes to the forward

position of dwellings at this point along Ridgeway. In this regard I do not find that the gable feature would be at all intrusive within the street scene.

10. Overall, I am satisfied that the proposal would not appear harmful to the character or appearance of No 15 or the wider street scene. As such there would be no conflict with Policy CP3 of the Wokingham Borough Core Strategy Development Plan Document (CS), adopted in January 2010 as it relates to the quality of design and the impact of development upon its surroundings.

Protected Species

11. The appellants have not disputed the Council's assertion that the site falls within an area which is suitable for bat foraging given the reasonable proximity of hedgerow-lined fields and the River Thames, both of which offer potential foraging habitats. In recognition of this the appellants submitted a Daylight Bat Survey (DBS) as part of the appeal. This found no evidence of roosting bats either on the exterior of the building or within it. It did however find evidence on the building of bat roosting opportunities. These would be lost as a result of the proposed extension. As a consequence of this I find there to be a risk that protected species may be adversely affected by the proposal.
12. The DBS was undertaken in April and outside of the active season for bats, which runs between May and September. It therefore recommends further 'emergence/re-entry' surveys to be undertaken. I am mindful however that Circular 6/2005: *Biodiversity and Geological Conservation - Statutory Obligations and Their Impact Within The Planning System* indicates that where there is a reasonable likelihood of a protected species being present and affected, a survey should be carried out before planning permission is granted. It goes on to advise that surveys should only be required by condition in exceptional circumstances. I have noted the timeframes associated with the submission of the appeal but I do not consider that these amount to exceptional circumstances and I have been presented with no further evidence to suggest that any exist in this case.
13. In addition, given that roosting opportunities for bats would be lost, the appeal plans show no details of how replacement roosting opportunities within the extension would be provided.
14. Overall, despite the appellants' endeavours, I cannot be certain that a bat population would not be adversely affected by the works and therefore the proposal would be contrary to CS Policy CP7. Amongst other things this seeks to ensure that new development can put in place mitigation measures to maintain or enhance the ability of a site to support fauna and flora, including protected species.

Conclusions

15. Notwithstanding my findings with regard to the effect of the proposal upon the character and appearance of the area, for the reasons given I conclude that the development could have the potential to harm biodiversity. As a consequence it would fail to protect the natural environment, a role that is required by the National Planning Policy Framework in order to secure an appropriately

sustainable form of development. The conflict that I have identified with both the development plan and national policy means that the appeal must fail.

John D Allan

INSPECTOR