

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: 18th July 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/H1705/D/17/3174159

The White Cottage, Popham Lane, North Waltham, RG25 2BD

- 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 Ellangovan against the decision of Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 16/04383/HSE, dated 24 November 2016, was refused by notice dated 27 January 2017.
 - The development proposed is extensions to rear/side to enlarge cottage along with the demolition of existing outbuildings and erection of a new one.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matter

2. There is a slight discrepancy between the spelling of the appellant's name on the original application form and the appeal form. I have taken the name from the application form and am satisfied that this is merely a typographical error and that the applicant and the appellant are one and the same person.

Main Issues

3. The main issues are the effect of the proposal on: - (i) the character and appearance of White Cottage and the wider area; (ii) highway safety; and (iii) protected species.

Reasons

Character and Appearance

4. The existing property is a modest cottage that has been modified and extended in a number of ways over time. Despite this, and its position close to the back edge of the highway along Popham Lane, it has a fairly inconspicuous presence within its countryside setting due to its low profile and articulated form.
 5. The works proposed are considerably more involved than implied by the original description of the development. Included amongst them are substantial extensions to the existing dwelling. According to the Council's figures, which have not been disputed, the existing ground floor footprint
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would be almost doubled by extending the building in the direction away from Popham Lane, with the amount of accommodation at first floor level increased from a modest and token 37sqm to an extensive living space totalling 208sqm. The remodelled building would be covered with a new and wholly integrated roof with a ridge-line around 3m higher than the tallest part of the existing, which significantly spans only just a small part of the existing property at this height.

6. The Council's *Design and Sustainability Supplementary Planning Document: Extending Your Home and Replacement Dwellings* (SPD), adopted February 2012, advises that the design and style of a proposed extension should replicate the design and style of the original house and that the basic shape of the extension should be subservient, and in proportion to the original building. Whilst it goes on to recognise that in some circumstances it may not be appropriate to design an extension which is truly subservient to the original building in every respect, it states that the size and scale (width, depth and height) of an extension remains critical in determining whether a development will remain in proportion to the building. It further states that extensions which are overly large in size and scale and are disproportionate in relation to the original house will not be favoured.
7. In this instance the resulting building will show no semblance of the original dwelling either in terms of its size, scale or appearance. It would replace a modest cottage with a fairly substantial two-storey contemporary looking home. Despite retaining elements of the existing building's fabric, for all intents and purposes the proposal would be akin to a replacement dwelling. In countryside locations such as this, the SPD advises that proposals for new dwellings that are significantly larger than the dwellings that they are replacing will only be permitted in exceptional circumstances where the development can be appropriately justified. It further advises that where an enlargement of around 50% in size is proposed, such proposals should be accompanied by a Landscape Impact Assessment, carried out in accordance with appropriately published guidelines.
8. Whilst in this instance it may not be the case that a replacement dwelling is proposed, the principles of the SPD insofar as they relate to the impact of new residential development in the Countryside are relevant, particularly as I note that part d to Policy S S6 – *New Housing in the Countryside* of the Basingstoke and Deane Local Plan (LP) (2011 to 2029), adopted in 2016, deals with replacement dwellings, and the extension to an existing dwelling, as one and the same. This allows for such development provided the size of the proposal would be appropriate to the plot and it would not be significantly visually intrusive in the landscape.
9. In this instance, despite the proposed additional landscaping to the site's frontage that may restrict views deeper into the appeal site from Popham Lane, the substantially enlarged scale of the dwelling would be clearly evident from the adjoining highway. The position of the current dwelling immediately adjacent to the roadside is typically reflective of its age and modest scale. The contemporary form and size of the altered building would be unsympathetic to this position and in this regard its siting would be inappropriate for the plot. In addition, I have been provided with no information with regard to longer distance views towards the property from the north where I cannot be certain

that the scale and form of the building would not be seen to impact upon the wider character of the open countryside which extends in this direction.

10. In a similar vein, I saw that the three outbuildings, which sit next to each other and deep into the plot, appear reasonably comfortable in their fairly open surroundings. Whilst they are of no particular aesthetic merit, their traditional pitched roofs and low rise scale is reflective of many such buildings within the countryside. In contrast their replacement with an apparently brick built, two-storey, box-like structure with an array of large windows at first floor level would appear wholly out of context and alien within its fairly isolated and open position. This too would have the potential to be seen from further afield where it would be damaging to the rural character of the area.
11. Although there are a number of trees on the site, I am not persuaded that any would be immediately affected or that, in themselves, they directly contribute to the wider character of the countryside, which comprises typically large open spaces beyond the roadside enclosures, a character feature that is true also for the vast majority area of the appeal site. Nevertheless, for the reasons given, I find that due to their size, scale and appearance, the proposed works to the dwelling would be intrusive and harmful to the character and appearance of the area, as would the erection of the proposed outbuilding in its own right. In this regard the works to the house would be in clear conflict with LP Policy S S6, and the development overall at odds with the aims and objectives of LP Policies EM1- *Landscape* and EM10 - *Delivering High Quality Development* insofar as they require all development proposals to be sympathetic to the character and visual quality of the area and to respect the local environment. For these reasons, the proposal would also fail to achieve the quality of design that is required by the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework).

Highway Safety

12. There are currently two access points to the site from Popham Lane. The first leads to an open area of parking directly adjacent to the road and immediately to the north-west side of the dwelling. The second is a gated access to a track that runs from the south-east corner of the plot to the three outbuildings. It is proposed to remove the parking area to the side of the dwelling and to plant additional landscaping along the roadside at this point. The second point of access would become the main access to the site, leading to a new parking area to the south-east side of the dwelling and onwards to the new outbuilding, which would have three garage spaces at ground floor level and office space above.
13. The appellant has argued that there would be an overall improvement to highway safety by removing the existing parking area to the side of the dwelling and creating a sole access where vehicles could enter and leave the site in forward gear. However, I saw during my visit that, whilst there were a few scattered vehicles along the track leading up to the outbuildings, the access at this point did not appear to be in frequent use as both the surface and junction with Popham Lane were overgrown, and the gate was padlocked.
14. I have been presented with no information relating to the current use of the outbuildings or any recorded vehicle movements associated with them. In addition, whilst it may be the case that cars may need to reverse into or out of

the existing parking area adjacent to the house, I have no evidence to suggest that this has resulted in any recorded accidents along the highway.

15. The proposed arrangement would consolidate all traffic movements to the house and detached outbuilding into one point of access, from where I saw that visibility onto Popham Lane was restricted in both directions. To the south-east views towards oncoming traffic is blocked by the corner of the adjoining building which is part of the Wheatsheaf Hotel. To the north-west visibility is restricted by vegetation to the front of the appeal site but which is shown to be retained as part of the proposal.
16. From the limited information I have available to me, I find that there would be an intensification of use to a poor and substandard access. Whilst the proposal may remove one possibly sub-standard access, I find no justification to accept the intensified use of another. I conclude therefore that the proposal would fail to provide safe, suitable and convenient access for all potential users of the site and that it would potentially compromise highway safety. In this regard it would directly conflict with LP Policy CN9-*Transport*

Protected Species

17. The appellant has not disputed the Council's view that the existing buildings have the potential to provide roosting habitats for bats. I have no reason to disagree that there is a reasonable likelihood of protected species being present on or near to the site. Given also that the development would involve work to the existing roof structure of the dwelling and demolition of the outbuildings there is a risk that protected species may be adversely affected by the proposal.
18. LP Policy EM4 – *Biodiversity, Geodiversity and Nature Conservation* states that development proposals will only be permitted if significant harm to biodiversity and/or geodiversity resulting from a development can be avoided. If that is not possible the impact should be adequately mitigated and it be clearly demonstrated that there will be no adverse impact on the conservation status of key species, and no loss or deterioration of a key habitat type.
19. No ecological information has been provided. I have carefully considered the appellant's suggestion that this matter could be controlled by condition but I am mindful 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 been presented with no evidence to suggest that there are exceptional circumstances in this case. I cannot be certain that a bat population would not be adversely affected by the works and therefore the proposal would be contrary to Policy EM4.

Other Matters

20. I have considered the impact of the proposal upon the nearby Grade II Listed Wheatsheaf Hotel but share the Council's view that, due to the location of the appeal site in relation to the primary location of the listed building, and the separation distances involved, there would be no impact upon the setting of

the listed building, the significance of which as a heritage asset would be unaffected.

21. The appellant has drawn comparison between the siting of parts of the Wheatsheaf Hotel immediately to the back edge of the highway along Popham Lane and the appeal proposal. However, despite the scale of the neighbouring building in this position, its prominent corner setting at the entrance from a main highway into Popham Lane, combined with its architectural and historic significance, sets it notably apart from the appeal proposal, which is to replace a modest cottage along the road's frontage with a large and contemporary extended dwelling.
22. I have noted the scale and appearance of other nearby buildings, including the fairly large and apparently recently constructed property opposite, and the vehicle repair garage slightly further along Popham Lane. However, both are set back from the highway's frontage such that each is viewed in its own setting in relation to the road. Although the property opposite is large, I have no details of the planning history to this site. The repair garage appears long established and although not an attractive range of buildings they are reasonably low rise and unobtrusive. Neither these, nor any other buildings nearby compare with the circumstances at the appeal property.
23. The appellant has drawn my attention to an appeal decision in April 2016 for a property known as Woodside within the administrative area of East Hampshire District Council (Ref: APP/M1710/D/15/3138737). Whilst this related to extensions and new roofs to an existing detached dwelling, I know nothing more about the details of that case. Regardless, I note that the Inspector concluded in that instance that the proposal would be appropriate in relation to the character and appearance of its local area. That is not my conclusion in this case, which in any event I have considered on its own merits.
24. The Council's reference to the possible enlargement of the dwelling's residential curtilage is noted but this was not reflected by anything that I saw during my visit and there is no evidence before me to suggest that this is the case.

Conclusions

25. For the reasons given, I find that the proposal would be harmful to the character and appearance of the area. I have also found that there would be potential for harm to highway safety and protected species. There would be clear conflict with the development plan and the Framework. As such, and having regard to all other matters raised, including the absence of any objections from any interested third parties, the appeal is dismissed.

John D Allan

INSPECTOR