



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 5 June 2017

by Philip Willmer BSc Dip Arch RIBA

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

Decision date: 20th July 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/X0415/D/17/3173007

Copper Beeches, Beamond End Lane, Beamond End, Amersham, Bucks, HP7 0QT.

- 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 T Higham against the decision of Chiltern District Council.
 - The application Ref CH/2016/2159/FA, dated 22 November 2016, was refused by notice dated 26 January 2017.
 - The development proposed is described as conversion of garage into habitable accommodation, single storey ground floor, remove and replace roof raised 1000mm above existing eaves level and 800mm above ridge level, first floor front extension, dormer roof extension, fenestration alterations.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The appeal site falls within the Green Belt. In its evidence the Council has referred to saved Policy GB13 of the Chiltern District Local Plan (Adopted 1 September 1997) (including alterations Adopted 29 May 2001), Consolidated September 2007 and November 2011 (LP). This policy advises, amongst other things, that the extension of an existing dwelling can be considered acceptable where the extension is both subordinate to the size and scale of the original dwelling house. Accordingly I consider that LP Policy GB13 is generally consistent with the aims of bullet point 3 of paragraph 89 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework). This advises that one of the exceptions to new buildings in the Green Belt being inappropriate is *the extension or alteration of a building provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building*.
3. From what I have seen and read I do not consider that the proposed extension, due to its size and volume, would result in a disproportionate addition over and above the size of the original building. I shall therefore consider this appeal on the basis that the Council determined it.
4. I therefore consider the main issues to be the effect of the proposed development on the architectural integrity of the host property, the setting of the adjacent listed building, Stud Cottage, and the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

Reasons

5. Copper Beeches, is a detached chalet bungalow situated in a large mature garden plot and located in the AONB. It is vernacular in form having both steep pitched gable end and hipped roofs. The garage has a simple flat roof.
6. To the north east of the appeal site is Stud Cottage, listed grade II. It is located in front of Copper Beeches and therefore closer to the lane. Due to a well-established dense high evergreen hedge, there are very limited if any views of the cottage other than from the rear garden of Copper Beeches that extends behind Stud Cottage.
7. The appellants contend that the existing chalet bungalow is of no particular architectural merit. In principle I would not disagree, nevertheless it is currently a well-proportioned and well-mannered example of this style and date of dwelling. Accordingly, any extensions and alterations should serve to enhance rather than detract from it.
8. Raising the eaves line of the house would result in a large gap being created between the head of the ground floor windows and the eaves line. This would result in the proportion of void to solid being dramatically changed to the overall detriment of the character and appearance of the property as extended.
9. The raising of the eaves line, as proposed, would further result in a large area of unrelieved bland walling to the side gable wall, the area of which is only broken by the utility room door.
10. In addition to raising the eaves line, the appellants propose forming a *sharp roof edge* with a concealed gutter. From the drawings it would appear, despite this detail, it is intended to tile the roof rather than cover it with a sheet covering that in my experience would be a more typical material from which to form such an eaves detail. Accordingly, in my opinion, given the nature of small unit tiles, it would be a difficult detail to form successfully. Nevertheless, this matter could, in the event that I were minded to allow the appeal, be subject to condition. However, the lack of an overhanging eaves here would serve to further exaggerate the gap between the window heads and roof that I consider in any case to be visually harmful.
11. It is proposed that new windows would be square or the proportions of the glazing bars of the existing windows altered to include a square window area to reflect a more contemporary taste in window proportions. In itself I do not consider this change to be harmful. Nevertheless, it is visually jarring when viewed in the context of the narrow slot window proposed to the dormer over the front door and the contrasting strong vertical emphasis of the narrow profile window to the hall/over the staircase and the banks of vertically proportioned skylights to roofs.
12. I also find uncomfortable the relationship of the dormer of the guest bedroom to both the hip line as well as its proximity to the skylight over the stairs, so that it would appear unduly cramped. In addition, the relationship of the proposed folding screen to the living room with the corner of the dwelling would appear so narrow and mean as to reinforce the already cramped and visually unfortunate relationship between the dormer, skylight/vertical window, screen and the corner of the building.

13. In principle, in this case where the increase in height would be limited, I would have no objection to the modest increase in the ridge height of the property or the introduction of more contemporary styling and finishes. Further, subject to a sensitive design, given the relationship of Copper Beeches to Stud Cottage, even if the intervening screening were removed, I do not consider, per se, that such alterations should necessarily be detrimental to the setting of Stud Cottage. However, by reason of the design detailing of the appeal scheme, should the hedge be removed or die back, it would appear as an assertive dominant neighbour that would detract from the setting of the heritage asset.
14. The Framework requires great weight to be given to the conservation of designated heritage assets, which include listed buildings. It draws a distinction between substantial harm and less than substantial harm to such an asset. For the latter, which applies here, the test is that the harm should be weighed against public benefits, including securing the optimum viable use.
15. The development would provide some limited economic benefit. However, given the harm that I have identified I conclude that the public benefits would not outweigh this harm, or the conflict that it would have with the objectives of Section 66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, the Framework and Policy CS20 of the Core Strategy for the Chiltern District (Adopted November 2011) (CS), LP Policies GC1, H15, H18 and LB2 as they relate to the quality of development and the preservation of the setting of listed buildings.
16. For the reasons set out above the proposed extensions and alterations would appear as incongruous additions. They would not respect the scale and proportions of the existing dwelling and would represent a poor form of design that would fail to either integrate with or contrast in a satisfactory manner with the vernacular form and styling of the existing dwelling.
17. I conclude that the proposed extensions and alterations would cause unacceptable harm to the architectural integrity of the host property. If the hedge was removed, the proposals would harmfully impact on the setting of the neighbouring heritage asset, and there would also be harm to the character and appearance of the AONB. It would therefore be contrary to CS Policies CS20 and CS22, LP Policies GC1, H15, H18, LB2 and LSQ1, the Residential Extensions and Householder Development SPD – Adopted 10 September 2013 and the Framework, as they relate to the quality of new development and the requirement for development to conserve or enhance the special character and scenic quality of the AONB as well as the preservation of the setting of listed buildings.

Conclusions

18. For the reasons given above and having regard to all other matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Philip Willmer

INSPECTOR