

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 1 August 2017

by Lynne Evans BA MA MRTPI MRICS

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

Decision date: 15 August 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/X0360/D/17/3176896
27 Starmead Drive, Wokingham RG40 2JA

- 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 Southan against the decision of Wokingham Borough Council.
 - The application Ref: 163618 dated 23 December 2016, was refused by notice dated 10 March 2017.
 - The development proposed is 2 storey and single storey front extension; single storey rear extension.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for 2 storey front extension; single storey rear extension at 27 Starmead Drive, Wokingham RG40 2JA in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref: 163618 dated 23 December 2016, subject to the following conditions:
 - 1) The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than three years from the date of this decision.
 - 2) The materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of the development hereby permitted shall match those used in the existing building.
 - 3) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: Existing Plans /01 and Proposed Plans /02B.

Preliminary Issues

2. The proposals, as described in the header above, were revised at the application stage to reduce the size and scale as well as amend the detailed design of the two storey front extension and remove the proposed single storey front extension. Given this amendment to remove the single storey front extension I have also removed reference to it from the description of development in the decision above. I note that the Council also did not refer to the single storey front extension in its decision notice.
 3. At the appeal stage, a Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment Report was submitted to address the second reason for refusal. I shall address this further under my second main issue.
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Main Issues

4. The main issues in this appeal are:

- a) the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the existing dwelling and of the local area; and
- b) the effect of the proposal on interests of ecological importance.

Reasons

Issue a) Character and Appearance

5. The appeal property is a detached two storey house in a development of detached dwellings within a predominantly residential area. There are a number of different designs within the development, and the houses are grouped by design. Although a number of the properties have since been altered, the appeal property shares a similar design with the properties to the immediate south east, whereas the neighbouring property on the other side at No 25 is of a different design and is similar in style to the properties on its other side. However, the character and appearance of the overall development is, in my view, also defined by the well spaced siting of the individual houses, many with staggered frontages and most set back from the road with verdant gardens as well as a general uniformity of scale.
6. I have noted the guidance in the Council's adopted Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) at Section 4.11, including that front extensions should generally be no more than 1 storey in height. However, I consider that the modest forward projection of the proposed two storey front extension, its width in relation to the property and the plot, as well as the set down of the proposed roof line would all combine to ensure that the proposal would appear in scale and proportion to the existing building. The design and proposed materials would also complement the existing building. As a result, it is my view that the proposal would respect the character and appearance of the existing property. It would, therefore, also accord with the more general guidance in the SPD, including that *the design of the proposed extension must be well considered and should complement the existing building, either by adopting its style or by a carefully considered contrast.*
7. Although there would be a difference in the detailed design with the neighbouring properties to the immediate south east, the staggered building line along this part of the street would be retained and there would be limited encroachment on the verdant front garden area. Furthermore, the resultant extended dwelling would not interrupt or harm the predominant pattern of development relating to scale, siting, proportions and materials. It is, therefore, my view that, notwithstanding the detailed change in the design, the proposal would not unbalance the rhythm of the street scene and would respect the character and appearance of the local area.
8. The single storey rear extension would be the full width of the property and in line with the rear wall of the existing garage. I consider that its scale, depth and general design would respect the character and appearance of the existing dwelling. The Council did not raise a specific objection to this element of the proposal.

9. I am therefore satisfied that the proposal would respect the character and appearance of the existing dwelling and of the local area. There would therefore be no conflict with Policies CP1 and CP3 of the adopted Wokingham Core Strategy 2010 (Core Strategy) as well as the National Planning Policy Framework (Framework), all of which seek a high quality of design which respects the local context and local distinctiveness.
10. The proposal would not fully accord with all the guidance in the SPD, but the SPD states that the overriding consideration will relate to the impact on street scene and character. In this regard, I have found no harm from the proposal before me. In the particular circumstances of this case, I am therefore satisfied that would be justification for an exception to be made to this part of the SPD.
11. My attention has been drawn by the Appellants to a front extension at No 12 on the opposite side of the road, which they consider is similar to their proposal. The neighbours at No 25 have expressed a concern that this proposal now before me would set a precedent for others to follow. However, each proposal must be judged on its individual merits and that has been the basis of my assessment.

Issue b) Interests of Ecological Importance.

12. I am advised that the appeal site falls within an area where the Council has identified the potential for bat roosts. The submitted Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment Report has, in my view, provided sufficient and satisfactory information to confirm that interests of acknowledged ecological importance, with particular reference to bats, would be unlikely to be affected as a result of the proposed development.
13. I am therefore satisfied that the evidence submitted demonstrates that the proposal would be unlikely to result in harm to interests of ecological importance. There would be no conflict with Policies CP3 and CP7 of the Core Strategy, Policy TB23 of the adopted Managing Development Delivery Local Plan 2014 as well as Section 11 of the Framework and the guidance in Circular 06/2005, all relating to protecting interests of ecological importance.

Other Considerations

14. The adjoining property at No 25 has fenestration on the side elevation facing towards the appeal property. However, it is obscure glazed and I note from the Officer's report that it all serves non-habitable rooms and that the kitchen with a side facing door also has a front facing window. I do not therefore consider that the proposed extension would materially harm the living conditions of the neighbours at No 25, with particular regard to loss of outlook. Given the modest scale of the proposal, the existing relationship and the nature of the windows at No 25 on the side elevation, I am also satisfied that there would be no material effect on light to these side facing windows and the rooms they serve. The Council also raised no concern in this regard.

Conditions and Conclusion

15. In terms of conditions, matching materials with the existing dwelling are required in the interests of protecting the character and appearance of the existing property and of the local area. I shall also add a condition to list the

approved plans for the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning. The Council has proposed a further condition to restrict the installation of windows in the side elevation of the two storey front extension but given the relationship with the neighbouring properties, on both sides, I do not consider that such a condition would be necessary to protect the neighbours' living conditions.

16. For the reasons set out above, and taking into account all other matters raised, including in representations, I conclude that this appeal should be allowed.

L J Evans

INSPECTOR