



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 29 August 2017

by K Taylor BSc (Hons) PGDip MRTPI

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

Decision date: 11 September 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/Q3115/W/17/3175868

New Dormer Bungalow, The Conifers, Beech Lane, Woodcote, Reading RG8 0PY

- 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 Nicholas Sanders against the decision of South Oxfordshire District Council.
 - The application Ref P16/S3371/FUL, dated 6 September 2016, was refused by notice dated 13 March 2017.
 - The development proposed is a new garage.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for a new garage at New Dormer Bungalow, The Conifers, Beech Lane, Woodcote, Reading RG8 0PY in accordance with the terms of the application Ref P16/S3371/FUL, dated 6 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: 16/88 Revisions – A (Location Plan), 16/88 P01 REVISION C (Proposed Block Plan), and 16/88 P02 Revision – B (PROPOSED PLANS & ELEVATIONS).
 - 3) The external materials shall be constructed in accordance with the details specified on the application form.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are the effect of the development on:
 - the character and appearance of the area and the need to conserve the landscape and scenic beauty of the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (the AONB); and
 - the living conditions of the future occupiers of the neighbouring Harlyn in respect of whether it would be overbearing.

Reasons

Character and appearance

3. Beech Lane is an area of residential character with the dwellings set in a loosely linear pattern on either side of the lane. The dwellings are set back from the road; however the degree of set back varies considerably with some dwellings having only short front gardens and others set deep within the plot. Many of the dwellings have a suburban character but, with the single track nature of the road, the area does have a semi-rural feel to it.

4. Planning permission has been granted for a dormer bungalow on the appeal site; this had been constructed only to slab level at the time of my site visit. Permission has also been recently granted for a dwelling, Harlyn, on the neighbouring site and construction was at a relatively advanced stage.
5. The development would introduce a double garage to the front of the appeal dwelling. Although outbuildings in the front gardens are not a common feature, with only one nearby example, its appearance would not be out of keeping with the semi-rural character of the area or the suburban design of many of the properties. The garage would be set back several metres from the lane and the grass verge such that the separation distance would not be dissimilar to that provided at the front of other properties in the locality. The garage would be a relatively prominent feature in the street, but it would be seen in the context of a good amount of space to its front and to either side such that it would not appear cramped. I therefore consider it would not erode the semi-rural character of the area.
6. The garage would be relatively tall as it has been designed to provide a first floor area in the roof space. Its ridge height would however be significantly lower than the finished ridge height of the main roof on the dormer bungalow. With its forward position the garage would be relatively prominent. However its scale and lower height is such that it would not compete with the main dwelling but rather it would have the appearance of an ancillary out building. It would have a simple and functional appearance and no dormer windows are proposed with only a small single window at first floor level. I therefore do not find the development to be contrary to the specific advice in Technical Document 6 of The South Oxfordshire Design Guide 2016 (SODG) which deals with domestic garages and outbuildings.
7. The Council suggests that the existing front garage, on the neighbouring site, did not conform to the design guidance that was in place at the time. While that may be so, the Council has not highlighted anywhere within the current guidance that specifically seeks to prohibit garages in front gardens. The existing evergreen hedge at the front of the site would minimise views of the garage. However, if this were removed, as appears to be the intention, the garage would be more visible. However, for the reasons given above, its appearance would not be out of keeping with the character of the area.
8. I therefore conclude that the development would not be harmful to the character or appearance of the area. I also consider the scale of the development and the site's location, within an area of residential character, mean it would not fail to conserve the landscape and scenic beauty of the AONB. The development would comply with Policies CSEN1 and CSQ3 of the South Oxfordshire Core Strategy and saved Policies D1, G2 and H13 of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan (the LP). These Policies seek to ensure development conserves or enhances the AONB, respects the character of the site and its surroundings and reinforces local distinctiveness including by ensuring the scale and design of outbuildings are in keeping with the character of the dwelling and the appearance of the surrounding area. There would also not be conflict with the overarching aims of the SODG which seeks to ensure high quality development is delivered.

Living conditions

9. The garage would sit close to the common boundary with Harlyn and to its front. A study is proposed in the ground floor of this neighbouring property

which will have an outlook towards the garage. The eaves height of the garage would only be a little above the usual height of a boundary treatment and the proposed orientation of the roof is such that it would slope away from the boundary. The other main living spaces in Harlyn would not be significantly affected by the development nor would the vast majority of the garden area. The garage and its roof would be seen from the study and result in the loss of some evening sunlight to a portion of the garden. However the effect of this would not be so great as to result in a materially harmful overbearing impact.

10. I therefore conclude that the development would not result in harm to the living conditions of the future occupiers of the neighbouring Harlyn. I find no conflict with Policy H13 of the LP which seeks to ensure the living conditions of occupants of nearby properties are not materially harmed. As the vast majority of the neighbouring garden would be unaffected by the development I also do not consider there to be conflict with the principles of the SODG which advises that gardens should not be overshadowed by garages.

Other matters

11. The garage would be sited to the front of the neighbouring Moonrakers. However it would be located a considerable distance from that property and on the opposite side of the lane. With the distances involved, despite its height, there would not be a significant overbearing effect and the living conditions of the occupiers of this neighbouring property would also not be harmed.

Conditions

12. I have imposed a condition specifying the relevant plans as this provides certainty. In the interests of the character and appearance of the area I have imposed a condition to require that the external materials are constructed as specified on the application form.

Conclusion

13. For the above reasons, I consider that the development accords with the development plan when taken as a whole. I conclude that the appeal should be allowed.

K Taylor

INSPECTOR