
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 2 October 2017

by J Ayres BA Hons, Solicitor

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

Decision date: 18th October 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/E0345/D/17/3180449

13 Highdown Hill Road, Emmer Green, Reading RG4 8QR

- 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 Robinson against the decision of Reading Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 170768, dated 15 May 2017, was refused by notice dated 10 July 2017.
 - The development proposed is a two storey side and rear extension.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the host property and the area, and the effect of the proposal on a protected species.

Reasons

Character and appearance

3. No 13 Highdown Hill Road is a large detached dwelling, located in a residential area. Part of the proposal would result in the host dwelling being extended by 2 storeys on both sides. The proposed scale and mass of the side extensions would be substantial, and they would not share the same width, depth or ridge height. The result would be a significant increase in the overall scale of the property, which would fail to demonstrate any broad sense of symmetry and would result in a dwelling that would appear piecemeal and visually cluttered.
4. The area comprises similarly large properties in generous gardens, a number of which have been extended. Due to the size of the host dwelling and its position within the plot, it would in my view accommodate a substantial extension without being overwhelmed or appearing incongruous within the street scene. However, the side elements of this proposal do not respond to each other in a positive way. The proposal would therefore fail to enhance the appearance of the property. This would have a detrimental impact on the scheme in its entirety, and as such the proposal would fail to respect the character of the area.

5. The design aspects of the proposal, with particular regard to the proposed roof would, in my view, respect the host dwelling. That being said, these aspects do not overcome my concerns relating to the lack of relationship between the side elements of the proposal.
6. As such, I find that the side extension elements of the proposal would not respond to the host dwelling, or each other, with regards to scale and massing. The proposal would consequently harm the character and appearance of the property. The result would be a property that did not enhance the character and appearance of the area. As such the proposal fails to comply with Policies CS7 and DM9 of the Reading Borough Local Development Framework: Core Strategy (2008, as altered 2015). Elements of the proposal would not respect the character of the house and would therefore conflict with the general aims of the Council's supplementary planning guidance; A Design Guide to House Extensions (2003).

The effect of the proposal on a protected species

7. A Bat Survey – Preliminary Roost assessment was carried out in April 2017 with a follow up assessment in August 2017. The surveys concluded that bat roosts are not currently present in the host property, and that there are unlikely to be any impacts on bats as a result of the proposal. The August update advised that should any evidence of bat roosts be found during works to the property, those works should cease whilst further advice is sought.
8. I therefore consider that adequate information has been supplied regarding protected species. It would be necessary to impose a suitable condition to deal with any future issues.
9. As such I find the proposal would comply with Policy CS36 of the Reading Borough Local Development Framework (2008, as amended 2015) with regards to protecting biodiversity.

Other Matters

10. The appellant has raised concerns regarding the handling of the application by the Council. However this is not a matter for me to consider as part of this appeal, and should be raised with the Council in the first instance.

Conclusion

11. I have found that the issue relating to the presence of bats has, at the time of my determination, been addressed by the appellant. However, I have found that the proposal would harm the character and appearance of the host property, and subsequently the area.
12. For the reasons set out above, and taking into account all other matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

J Ayres

INSPECTOR