



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 9 July 2019 by Scott Britnell MSc FdA

Decision by R C Kirby BA(Hons) DIPTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 30th July 2019

Appeal Ref: APP/W0340/D/19/3227901

10 Alexander Road, Thatcham, RG19 4QU

- 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 Ken Miles against the decision of West Berkshire Council.
 - The application Ref 18/02856/HOUSE, dated 22 October 2018, was refused by notice dated 8 February 2019.
 - The development proposed is described as "Retrospective planning to extend rear extension in line with structural walls to ground floor".
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Appeal Procedure

2. The site visit was undertaken by an Appeal Planning Officer whose recommendation is set out below and to which the Inspector has had regard before deciding the appeal.

Procedural Matters

3. Within its refusal reason the Council refer to its adopted Quality Design SPD. As I have not been provided with a copy of this document, I am unable to assess the appeal against it.
4. The Council's decision was issued prior to the most recent changes to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) in February 2019. However, the paragraphs referred to by the Council are unaffected by these changes.

Main Issue

5. The effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the host dwelling and surrounding area.

Reasons for the Recommendation

6. The appeal site comprises a semi-detached dwelling house located on the east side of Alexander Road. The property reflects the local vernacular with the immediate area consisting predominantly of 2 storey dwelling houses constructed in brick. The pattern of development is such that regular spacing is found between properties, although single storey side additions and garages are a common feature in Alexander Road. There are also a number of two storey side extensions.

7. When viewed from the front of the property, the side extension appears proportionate in relation to the host dwelling despite the continuation of the ridge from the existing roof. The first-floor window matches the existing and the small area of timber cladding is acceptable, despite this not being a common material in the street scene.
8. However, the rear extension, due to its width, depth, height, fenestration and materials is a bulky, incongruous and disproportionate addition, which unbalances the host property, giving it a top-heavy appearance.
9. The works have resulted in the appeal dwelling physically joining No 8 Alexander Road. While the sense of spaciousness between dwellings is referred to by the Council as being a characteristic of the area, this has been diluted to a degree by the various forms of extensions that have been carried out along Alexander Road. Within this context, I do not consider that the sense of terracing that has occurred as a result of the works causes significant harm to the character and appearance of the area.
10. I acknowledge that public views of the rear extension are limited, however it is highly prominent in views from surrounding properties and their gardens. The contribution that the host property makes to the character and appearance of the area has been significantly diminished by the rear extension and has likely reduced the appreciation of the quality of the environment in which nearby occupiers live. As such, harm, albeit limited, has been caused to the character and appearance of the area.
11. In light of my findings, I conclude that the development fails to respect the character and appearance of the host property and the area. This is in conflict with Policies CS14 and CS19 of the West Berkshire Core Strategy 2006 – 2026 which among other things, seek to ensure high quality and sustainable design that respects and enhances the character and appearance of the area, and makes a positive contribution to the quality of life in West Berkshire. Moreover, there would be conflict with paragraphs 124 and 127 of the NPPF.
12. In reaching this conclusion I have had regard to the appellant's suggestion that timber has been used to reduce the carbon footprint of the build. However, no further information is before me, and I afford this point only limited weight. My attention has also been drawn to other extensions in the locality at Nos 18 and 25 Alexander Road. Whilst I have been provided with drawings of what appears to be extensions to these properties, I have no further information before me relating to these developments. In any case, the presence of extensions in the area does not justify harmful development as identified. Each planning application and appeal needs to be determined on its merits.

Other Matters

13. There appears to be a protracted history of extension works at the appeal site. The current development follows a grant of planning permission for extension works in 2006, a permission the Council acknowledges is extant. I have been provided with a copy of the Planning Permission and the Council's Report, but not the approved drawing relating to this permission. The appellant has provided what appears to be an extract of this within his submitted documents which appears to have been prepared for Thatcham Town Council. The extension shown in this drawing is considerably different to the appeal extension in scale, form and design. Consequently, should the extension

shown in that drawing represent the extant extension, I do not consider that it would justify retention of the current works.

14. The appellant's statement also refers to a Thames Water sewer pipe close to the original proposed elevation, and the lack of foundations to the garage wall over the pipe, as reasons for carrying out the current works. While I acknowledge that such issues may be problematic for the appellant, I do not consider that they are determining issues in this appeal.

Conclusion and Recommendation

15. For the reasons given above, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Scott Britnell

APPEAL PLANNING OFFICER

Inspector's Decision

16. I have considered all the submitted evidence and the Appeal Planning Officer's report and on that basis the appeal is dismissed.

RC Kirby

INSPECTOR