



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 30 July 2019

by Tobias Gethin BA (Hons), MSc, MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 8 August 2019

Appeal Ref: APP/L1765/D/19/3227126

14 Birch Hill Cottages, Trampers Lane, North Boarhunt PO17 6DB

- 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 Leonard against the decision of Winchester City Council.
 - The application Ref 18/02556/HOU, dated 1 November 2018, was refused by notice dated 28 February 2019.
 - The development proposed is described as demolish an existing single storey garage / utility room to the side of the existing house and replace with a two storey extension, forming an additional bedroom with ensuite, a replacement utility room, WC and enlarged kitchen area.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the development on the character and appearance of the surrounding area.

Reasons

3. The appeal site contains a semi-detached building with single-storey side projection. It is situated at the end of a row of properties of a similar scale and appearance. There is a relatively large, prominent hedge running along the southern boundary and adjoining unmade track. Being at the end of the line of semi-detached properties and with a recreation/playground and open rolling fields to the south, I observed on my site visit that the site and hedge are visible from the public realm, including from the track, the recreation ground and for some distance along Trampers Lane. The hedge appears as an important natural landscape feature which contributes to the character and appearance of the surrounding area and provides visual separation between the countryside and the more built-up residential area to the north.
4. The development, involving amongst other aspects a two-storey side extension with a larger footprint than the existing side projection, would extend up to and partly within the hedge line. This would require a length of hedge, which did not appear on my site visit to be of particularly poor quality, to be removed. Although a replacement hedge is proposed, it would be significantly narrower at its narrowest point than the existing hedge. To provide natural daylight within the kitchen and utility room, the replacement hedge would also be cut back around the extension's side windows.

5. The intrusion into the hedge, combined with the proposal bringing two-storey built form up to the site's boundary and into the hedgerow, would result in the extension appearing from the south as a visually dominating and cramped addition. Due to its size, it would be significantly more prominent from the surrounding area than the existing side projection which, although situated adjacent to the hedgerow, is not particularly noticeable given its limited size and the height of the hedge. I recognise that the Council has not raised concerns with the scale and appearance of the extension. However, its design and the proposed external materials do not lead me to a different conclusion.
6. The replacement hedge would appear to be cramped in and dominated by the extension's size, height and its protrusion into the hedge line. The reduced width and the pruning of the replacement hedge around the three side windows would mean that its contribution to the character and appearance of the surrounding area would also be considerably reduced compared to the existing hedge. The retaining of the remainder of the hedgerow and a condition securing retention of the replacement section would not offset this.
7. It has been put to me that a single-storey side extension with a similar footprint to the appeal proposal could be constructed as permitted development and that this would result in removal of part of the hedgerow. However, I have not been supplied with evidence to demonstrate whether such works would be permitted development and it is not for me, under a section 78 appeal, to determine what other schemes may fall within permitted development rights. Given there is an existing single-storey side projection and without evidence to indicate that this is anything more than a theoretical scenario, it also seems unlikely to me that such an extension would be pursued if the appeal proposal were not allowed. I therefore give this scenario limited weight.
8. I recognise that the existing projection runs along the hedge and includes fenestration on the side. Although the hedge had been pruned around an existing window, I observed on my site visit that the cutting was relatively discreet whereas the development would include more and larger windows which would require significantly more pruning. There is also a rooflight in the existing projection which the extension would not include. It seems to me that the development would therefore require significantly more cutting back of the hedge than the existing situation, that the pruning would be more intrusive and prominent and would be clearly experienced as more than natural undulations. Accordingly, this would erode the qualities of the replacement hedge and reduce its ability to mitigate the harm arising from the development.
9. It has been put to me that the existing hedge could be removed at any time. Be that as it may, I observed on my site visit that the existing hedge provides the site with significant screening and privacy, including from the adjoining track and recreation ground. It seems to me that its removal is therefore unlikely and I have little substantive evidence that the appellants would do this. I therefore do not consider this scenario to be particularly likely and consequently attach limited weight to it.
10. For the above reasons, I conclude that the proposed development would harm the character and appearance of the surrounding area. I therefore find it conflicts with Policies DM15 and DM23 of the Winchester District Local Plan Part 2 (2017). Amongst other aspects, these require development to respect the qualities, features and characteristics that contribute to the distinctiveness of

the local area and seek to minimise visual intrusion, conserve and enhance key landscape characteristics, including hedgerows, and avoid the loss of key features of the locality.

Other matters

11. I note the appellants' reference to their pre-application discussions with the Council and that they heeded the advice of Officers. However, this is not determinative as to the acceptability of the appeal proposal. I have therefore considered the proposal on its merits, based on the evidence before me.
12. The development would provide extra space for the appellants' growing family and would replace the existing additions with a higher quality extension. Neighbours and the parish council did not object to the planning application. I recognise that the existing hedge may also be non-native and that the replacement hedge would provide fruit and flowers which could increase wildlife value. Be that as it may, these matters do not outweigh the harm I have identified nor provide justification for development that conflicts with the development plan.

Conclusion

13. For the above reasons, the appeal is dismissed.

Tobias Gethin

INSPECTOR