
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 24 June 2020

by D Peppitt BA (Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 17th July 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/V3120/D/20/3247154

Highfield House, Barrow Road, Drayton, Abingdon OX14 4SU

- 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 B Vacher against the decision of Vale of White Horse District Council.
 - The application Ref P19/V2439/HH, dated 1 October 2019, was refused by notice dated 17 January 2020.
 - The development proposed is garage extension and loft conversion.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission granted for a garage extension and loft conversion at Highfield House, Barrow Road, Drayton, Abingdon OX14 4SU, in accordance with the terms of the application Ref P19/V2439/HH dated 1 October 2019, and the plans submitted with it, 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: 2120.G.1, 2120.G.2, 2120.G.3 and 2120.G.4.
 - 3) 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.
 - 4) The garage extension and loft conversion hereby permitted shall not be occupied at any time other than for purposes ancillary and incidental to the residential use of the dwelling known as Highfield House.

Main Issue

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

Reasons

3. The appeal site is located towards the end of Barrow Road, a narrow road with houses on one side and open space to the other. The site contains a detached dwelling along with a detached double garage, which is set back from the road. To the side of the garage is a driveway to a neighbouring dwelling. The site is situated near predominately residential buildings, which are characterised by

- large detached dwellings with detached garages in a variety of styles. To the north of the site there is a public footpath and cycleway, which is set behind mature trees and landscaping and links Barrow Road to Corneville Road. The site is surrounded by mature hedging and trees to the north and the east, and existing dwellings to the west, which restricts wider views towards the site.
4. The proposal is for an extension of the existing garage and the introduction of a first floor, which would be accessed via an external staircase to a new side facing gable. The existing garage is in close proximity to the main house and the new side gable and staircase would be positioned towards and between the house. This would provide a clear visual connection and association between the house and the garage. The main house has 3 gable style dormer windows on its north elevation, therefore, the addition of a single gable on the southern elevation of the garage, would not compete with or dominate, the existing design features.
 5. Due to the positioning of the garage, and the gable extension being positioned towards the house, it would not be visually prominent. Whilst some views of the structure would be possible from the surrounding area, there would only be glimpses of the structure, rather than full views. I acknowledge that the extension would be recognisable when immediately in front of the site on Barrow Road. However, the access door to the upper level would not be readily visible. The garage would be seen as an associated ancillary structure to the main house, and would not be overly domesticated in its appearance.
 6. I note that there is a similar scheme near to the site that has been given planning permission¹, which I observed on my site visit. The approval at Swallowfield House does not include an extension to the roof, but it does include additions to the external appearance of the garage such as an external staircase and windows and doors, and overall is similar to this proposal. Furthermore, the approval at Swallowfield House is readily visible from the adjacent public footpath and cycleway, when compared to this proposal. Whilst this proposal has an alteration to the roofslope, the garage would remain subservient in scale and design to the main house.
 7. I note the Council has made reference to an appeal² which they suggest supports their refusal, as the Inspector dismissed an outbuilding with dormer windows. Whilst the appellants have provided a diagram of the dismissed building, I do not have full details before me to determine if this case is directly comparable. In any case, each proposal must be determined on its own planning merits and within its own context.
 8. The Council has also suggested that the proposal would be contrary to the guidance on dormer windows in the Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (2015). However, this guidance is for roof extensions and loft conversions for dwellings rather than garages and this proposal does not include dormer windows. Therefore, this guidance is not relevant to the proposal before me.
 9. The proposal would not harm the character and appearance of the site and surrounding area. Therefore, it would accord with Policy CP37 of the Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031, Part 1 (2016) and Paragraph 127 of the National

¹ Planning approval reference P04/V0949

² APP/V3120/D/18/3214809

Planning Policy Framework. These policies, amongst other things, require development to respond positively to the site and its surroundings and that the scale, height, grain, massing, type details and materials are appropriate for the site and surrounding area.

Other Matters

10. An interested party has suggested that the proposal would provide a first floor level viewing platform over the neighbouring house and that it would need screening from that view. Whilst the staircase would allow some views to the frontage of the neighbouring properties, this space is not private outdoor space and is already overlooked. In addition, the staircase would be used intermittently and for brief periods of time, therefore, this would not be materially harmful. The window that would face the neighbouring properties is at a high level, which would prevent opportunities for overlooking. Consequently, there would be no harm to the living conditions of the occupiers of the neighbouring properties.

Conditions

11. The Council has suggested conditions which I have assessed in regard to the advice provided in the Planning Practice Guidance. In addition to the standard condition which limits the lifespan of the planning permission, I have specified the approved plans for the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of certainty. A condition relating to materials is necessary to ensure that the appearance of the detached garage would be satisfactory. I have also imposed a condition to ensure the garage remains incidental and ancillary to the main house. However, I have not included details on the curtilage, as this is not necessary to ensure it remains incidental and ancillary.
12. The Highway Authority has suggested a condition restricting the use of the garage for car parking, as well as the submission of a parking plan prior to the first. However, there is sufficient parking already, as demonstrated on the submitted plans and there is no increase in bedrooms, therefore, neither condition is considered necessary nor reasonable.

Conclusion

13. For the reasons set out above, I conclude that the appeal is allowed.

D Peppitt

INSPECTOR