
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 28 July 2020

by S Shapland BSc (Hons) MSc CMILT MCIHT

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 12 August 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/W0340/D/20/3246611

Laurel Cottage, Chapel Lane, Hermitage, Thatcham RG18 9RL

- 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 Tom Robinson against the decision of West Berkshire Council.
 - The application Ref 19/02735/HOUSE, dated 31 October 2019, was refused by notice dated 31 January 2020.
 - The development proposed is alterations and a two storey extension to the rear of Laurel Cottage.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for alteration and a two storey side extension to Laurel Cottage at Laurel Cottage, Chapel Lane, Hermitage, Thatcham RG18 9RL in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref 19/02735/HOUSE, dated 31 October 2019, 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: 1101-01 Revision A Location Plan, 1101-02 Existing Site Plan, 1101-04 Existing Ground Floor Plan, 1101-05 Existing First Floor Plan, 1101-06 Existing Roof Floor Plan, 1101-07 Existing Elevations, 1101-08 Existing Elevations and Sections, 1101-09 Existing Sections, 1101-10 Revision D Proposal Site Plan, 1101-11 Revision F Proposal Floor Plans, 1101-12 Revision D Proposal Roof Plan, 1101-13 Revision E Proposal Sections, 1101-14 Revision E Proposal Elevations, 1101-15 Revision D Proposal Elevations, 1103-18 Site Analysis
 - 3) The external surfaces of the development hereby permitted shall be constructed in the materials shown on plan no. 1101-15 Proposal Elevations Revision D.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are the effect of the proposal on:
 - the character and appearance of the host dwelling and surrounding area including the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

- the living conditions of occupiers of Fairlie with particular regard to privacy.

Reasons

Character and appearance

3. The appeal site comprises a detached cottage situated on a triangular corner plot within the settlement boundary of Hermitage. It was evident during my site visit that the design of properties within the locality of the site is characterised by bungalows and 2-storey detached houses of varying designs. There is an eclectic mix of property styles which gives the locality a pleasing character. The appeal site is of a moderately simple design, which includes a gable ended roof finished with plain tiles. The appeal proposal would replace an existing single storey extension with a larger two storey rear extension. This would have a lower ridge and eaves height than the host dwelling, and would extend a distance of approximately 3.6 metres to the rear. The extension would have a pitched roof with gable end, with a similar pitch to the host property.
4. The Council have raised concerns that the proposal by virtue of its scale and massing would represent a dominate and unsympathetic addition to the host dwelling. The West Berkshire House Extensions Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) states that the basic shape and design of extensions should be subservient to the design of the original building. Where practicable extensions should have pitched roofs, which match the pitch of the existing roof. In this instance the proposal would have a lower roof and eaves height than the host dwelling, which would achieve a degree of subservience. Whilst the extension is sizable, I do not find that the scale would mean it would appear overly dominate to the host dwelling.
5. The proposed gable ended roof of the extension would integrate well with the host dwelling, and is a design feature replicated within the locality. Furthermore, the introduction of the oak frame to the rear would introduce a design feature which ties in with existing oak framed features of the cottage. These oak features give the proposal a pleasing rural characteristics, which I find complements the rural nature of both the host dwelling and surrounding area. I therefore find the proposal would not harm the character and appearance of the host dwelling.
6. The appeal site is well screened, and as such the appeal proposal would not be readily visible from outside of the appeal site. The proposal could be glimpsed from Chapel Lane, however I consider that the design of the proposed extension would be well proportioned and integrate well with the host dwelling. It would not be out of keeping with the design features of other nearby properties and thus does not harm the character and appearance of the wider streetscape and surrounding area.
7. The site is located in the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 requires that I have regard to the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of AONB's. Furthermore, Paragraph 172 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) specifies that great weight must be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty of these areas. In this instance, I have found that the proposal would not harm the character and

appearance of the host dwelling and surrounding area, and would be sensitively designed. As such it would conserve the natural beauty of the AONB.

8. Accordingly, I find that the proposal would not harm the character and appearance of the host dwelling and surrounding area, including the AONB. As such, there is no conflict with policies CS14, CS19 and ADPP5 of the West Berkshire Core Strategy 2006-2026 (CS). Together these policies seek, amongst other things that development is of a high quality design that respects the character and appearance of the area and conserves the AONB. I find no conflict with Paragraph 172 of the Framework which seeks, amongst other things that great weight is given to conserving AONB's. I have identified no conflict with the Quality Design SPD or Home Extensions SPG, which seek, amongst other things, that new development is of a high quality design that protects the character of the host dwelling and local area.

Living conditions

9. The Council have raised concerns that given the scale and position of the proposed extension, that there would be harm to the privacy of neighbouring occupiers of Fairlie, which is located to the rear of the appeal site. This neighbouring dwelling has a first floor bedroom at the rear of the property, with windows on the rear elevation. This is located approximately 2 metres from the boundary with the appeal site. From my site visit it was evident that there is considerable tall mature vegetation along the boundary of the appeal site, and as such there is limited inter-visibility between the two dwellings.
10. In any event, this window in the neighbouring property does not look directly into the appeal site, given its orientation it would only be able to view the appeal proposals at an oblique angle. Whilst the appeal proposal would bring development closer to the boundary of the neighbouring property, I do not find that it would harm the privacy of the neighbouring occupiers. There would be adequate separation distance between the appeal proposal and the boundary to ensure there would not be any undue overlooking from the appeal proposal into the garden of this neighbouring property. Nor do I find that the scale of the proposal would be of such a scale that that it would lead to any sense of enclosure and overbearing within this neighbouring property.
11. Consequently, I find that the proposal would not harm the living conditions of the neighbouring occupiers of Fairlie and as such there is no conflict with policy CS14 of the CS. This seeks, amongst other things that development is of a high quality design that makes a positive contribution to quality of life. I find no conflict with the Quality Design SPD and House Extension SPG, which seek, amongst other things that development ensures adequate privacy is maintained for neighbouring occupiers.

Conditions

12. In addition to the standard time limit condition I have imposed a condition requiring that the development is carried out in accordance with the approved plans. This is in the interest of certainty. A condition relating to the external materials is necessary to ensure that the appearance of the proposals would be satisfactory.

Conclusions

13. For the reasons given above, I conclude that the appeal should be allowed.

S Shapland

INSPECTOR