
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: 18 August 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/Q3115/D/20/3246881

Old Well Cottage, Whitchurch Hill, Reading RG8 7PQ

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant planning permission under section 73A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 for the development of land carried out without complying with conditions subject to which a previous planning permission was granted.
 - The appeal is made by Mr & Mrs A Elliott against the decision of South Oxfordshire District Council.
 - The application Ref P19/S2819/HH, dated 19 September 2019, was refused by notice dated 27 November 2019.
 - The application sought planning permission for demolition of existing conservatory and erection of a two storey side extension in its place. Some internal reconfiguration (as amended by plans received 27 February 2018 reducing the amount of glazing and stepping back rear gable) without complying with a condition attached to planning permission Ref P17/S4457/HH, dated 7 March 2018.
 - The condition in dispute is No 2 which states that: *The development hereby approved shall be carried out in accordance with the details shown on the following approved plans, P04, P03, P02, P06, P01, P05a, P08a and P07a, except as controlled or modified by conditions of this permission.*
 - The reason given for the condition is: *To secure the proper planning of the area in accordance with Development Plan policies.*
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Background and Main Issue

2. At the time of my site I observed that the two storey side extension is not in accordance with the approved plans, and I have dealt with the appeal on that basis.
3. The appellants wish to make a number of amendments to the scheme granted planning permission under reference P17/S4457/HH, in order to regularise what has been built on site and to provide additional mitigation works to ameliorate the unauthorised extension works. This would mean varying condition 2 to include revised plans. The main issue is therefore the effect of varying condition 2 on the character and appearance of the area, including the proposed changes to the design of the extension as built.

Reasons

4. The appeal property forms one half of a pair of semi-detached dwellings located within Whitchurch Hill. The property is located on the northern side of Goring Heath Road, and is surrounded by development to the north, east and

west. To the south is open countryside. The site is located within the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

5. Planning permission was granted to extend the appeal dwelling on 7 March 2018 under reference P17/S4457/HH (hereafter referred to as the approved scheme). It is common ground that the approved two storey extension has not been built in accordance with the approved plans. The approved scheme maintained the hip roof arrangement for the host dwelling, with the two storey side extension being set back from the front elevation, and having a lower ridge height than the host dwelling. The reason for this was to ensure that the extension maintained subservience to the host dwelling, and did not appear as an incongruous addition.
6. The two storey extension as built has removed the existing hip roof arrangement from the host dwelling, and the ridge line of the extension has been built higher than that of the host dwelling. The proposed amendments would seek to regularise the extension, and would also include a new parapet wall between the host dwelling and the extension. The Council have raised concerns that the extension as built harms the character and appearance of the area, and appears overly dominate from the host dwelling. Furthermore, the proposed parapet wall would not ameliorate the harm caused by the extension not appearing subservient.
7. The South Oxfordshire Design Guide 2016 (SODG) states that extensions to dwellings should be sensitive to the character and appearance of the original dwelling and street scene. In respect of side extensions, it states that side extensions must be subordinate to the principle dwelling. The extension as built does not appear subservient to the host dwelling. Whilst I appreciate the difference in height is not significant, having both a ridge height and eaves height higher than the host dwelling makes the extension appear as a bulky unsympathetic addition. It is clear from the officer assessment of the approved scheme that it was only acceptable due to both a front set back and lowered ridge height, in order that there was subservience between the extension and host dwelling.
8. By not having any subservience the extension as built has unbalanced the pair of semi-detached dwellings. The proposal is highly visible from the public domain, including both Goring Heath Road and Bridle Road. The proposed parapet wall, in my view does not mitigate the harm caused by the additional height of the extension. It is evident that even with the parapet wall, the difference in ridge and eaves height would still remain highly noticeable, and the proposal would be an overly dominate and incongruous addition.
9. The appellant has indicated that decorative rooftiles could be included on the host dwelling, which would go some way to mask the difference in height. However, I do not find this is a satisfactory solution, as these decorative tiles would only appear on one half of the pair of semi-detached dwellings. It would introduce a feature which is discordant with the neighbouring property and out of keeping with the immediate character of the area. The appellants have indicated that they would be willing to accept a planning condition to alter the colour of the fascia boards to help reduce the visual impact. However, I do not find that this minor alteration would overcome the fundamental harm to the character and appearance of the host dwelling I have identified above.

10. It was evident from my site visit that there is a variety of house styles within the locality of the appeal site, with considerable differences in design features and roof types. However, the appeal property is visible from both Goring Heath Road and Brindle Road, and the incongruous addition to the host dwelling was clearly identifiable from a distance. The extension as built is jarring with the surrounding properties, and the proposed parapet wall does not mitigate this. As such I consider the proposal is not in keeping with the character and appearance of the surrounding area.
11. The appeal is located within an AONB and 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 specifies that great weight must be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty of these areas. I am satisfied that given the scale of the proposal there would be no harm to the wider AONB and as such the proposed would conserve the natural beauty of the AONB.
12. The appellant has indicated that there would be a considerable financial burden, should they be required to undertake alterations to the property to lower the roof in line with the approved scheme. Whilst I am sympathetic of this fact, such personal circumstances do not outweigh the considerable harm to the character and appearance I have identified above.
13. Consequently, I consider the proposal as built is harmful to the character and appearance of the host dwelling and surrounding area, and this harm would not be overcome with the proposed amendments. There would be conflict with policy CSQ3 of the South Oxfordshire Core Strategy 2027 (CS) and policies H13, G2 and D1 of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011. Together these policies seek, amongst other things, that extensions are of a good design which are of a scale in keeping with the character of the dwelling. I have also identified conflict with the SODG which seeks, amongst other things, that extensions respect the character and appearance of the existing dwelling. The Council have made reference to the Framework. Whilst I have not been directed to the specific area of conflict, the proposal would fail to accord with section 12, which seeks amongst things, that developments of a good design that is sympathetic to the surrounding built environment.
14. The Council has made reference to policy CSEN1 of the CS, which seeks amongst other things, that high priority will be given to the conservation and enhancement of the AONB. As I have found no harm to the AONB there is no conflict with this policy.
15. For the above reasons, the appeal is dismissed.

S Shapland

INSPECTOR