
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 21 July 2020

by S Shapland BSc (Hons) MSc CMILT MCIHT

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 27 August 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/X0360/W/20/3245882

White Horse Farm, White Horse Lane, Finchampstead, Wokingham RG40 4LY

- 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 Sheldon Seal against the decision of Wokingham Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 192855, dated 25 October 2019, was refused by notice dated 3 January 2020.
 - The development proposed is preservation, refurbishment and re-roofing of existing frontage stable and store to form double garage and store.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for preservation, refurbishment and re-roofing of existing frontage stable and store to form double garage and store at White Horse Farm, White Horse Lane, Finchampstead, Wokingham RG40 4LY in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref 192855, dated 25 October 2019, subject to the conditions in the attached schedule.

Background and Main Issues

2. Planning permission¹ was granted for the demolition of the existing buildings on the appeal site, to be replaced with a new two storey pitched roof dwelling comprising five bedrooms. The decision notice included a condition which required the demolition and removal of all the buildings on the site, which included the frontage stable which is the subject of this appeal. From my site visit it was apparent that the two storey dwelling has been constructed, however the frontage stable had not yet been demolished. I have considered the appeal on this basis and the plans provided as part of the appeal.
3. The main issues are the effect of the proposal on the:
 - Character and appearance of the area; and
 - Living conditions of neighbouring occupiers of White Horse Barn, with particular regard to outlook.

Reasons

Character and appearance

¹ Application reference 180983 approved 12 August 2018

4. The appeal site is adjacent to White Horse Lane. The surrounding area is predominately rural, but adjacent to the appeal site is a number of residential dwellings. White Horse Lane is narrow and appears rural in its character, with mature vegetation along much of its length. On the northern side of the highway the views are of wide open fields. The frontage stable which is the subject of this appeal is a simple concrete block stable with gable ended roof. It is set back from the edge of the highway, and there is a mature oak tree in the verge between the frontage stable and edge of the carriageway.
5. The appeal proposal would retain the existing stable building, and proposes no increase to either the height or footprint of the building. It would retain the existing concrete slab and exterior walls. The roof would be replaced with a new hip roof finished in tiles matching the residential dwelling on the site. The proposal would introduce new timber cladding on the exterior walls, which would be stained black to match the adjacent residential dwelling known as White Horse Barn.
6. The Council have raised concerns that the proposal in its prominent location is harmful to the streetscape, and its location in front of the main dwelling creates an inconsistent building line. I do not find this to be the case. Given the rural nature of the area, there is currently no consistent building line along the frontage of White Horse Lane.
7. The adjacent residential dwelling known as White Horse Barn is situated in close proximity to the edge of highway, whilst the dwelling on the other side of the appeal site is set back behind a large driveway and turning area. The current frontage building is similar in siting to White Horse Barn, and as such its location is appropriate. In any event, in rural locations such as this, disparities of the siting of buildings is more common than would be found in planned layouts in urban areas. Having such variations provides a more informal streetscape, which complements the rural character of the area.
8. The proposed changes to the frontage stable are relatively minor, and it would maintain the same footprint and height as existing. The inclusion of wooden cladding on the exterior would match the existing neighbouring dwelling, and would respond well to the context of that neighbouring property. This timber cladding would help to soften the wall adjacent to the highway.
9. Whilst the appeal building is in a location near the edge of the highway, there is a mature tree adjacent to the building which goes some way to break up the built form of the stables. The proposed timber cladding and alterations to the roof would lead to a pleasing design which would, in my view, integrate well with the new dwelling.
10. Whilst I appreciate that the frontage stables were due to be demolished in the previously approved scheme, they already exist and thus have an established presence within the streetscape. In this respect, the proposal would not be introducing any new built form onto White Horse Lane, merely changing the exterior appearance. In addition, whilst the Council have raised concerns that retaining the stables would reduce the amount of landscaping on site, I do not share these concerns and landscaping can be addressed through a suitable planning condition.
11. Furthermore, I do not find that the proposal would harm the character and appearance of the area, as the building would retain a rural appearance which

would sit well within the character of the streetscape. The proposal would allow for garage parking which would respect the character and appearance of the area.

12. Accordingly, I find that the proposal would not harm the character and appearance of the area. There is no conflict with Policies CP1 and CP3 of the Wokingham Borough Core Strategy (CS), Policies R1, R7, R9, R23, RD5 of the Wokingham Borough Council Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). These policies seek, amongst other things, that development is of a high quality design that responds positively to the underlying character of the area. There is no conflict with Policy P2 of the SPD which seeks to ensure parking in residential development is compatible with the local character. I have identified no conflict with paragraph 170 of the National Planning Policy Framework, which seeks, amongst other things that planning decisions contribute to and enhance the natural environment by recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside.
13. There is no conflict with Policies CC03 and TB21 of the Wokingham Borough Adopted Managing Development Delivery Local Plan (LP) and Policy RD1 of the SPD which seeks, amongst other things, that development retains or enhances characters and features that contribute to the landscape, including green infrastructure. The Council's decision notice makes reference to Policies R2 and R11 of the SPD. I do not find these directly relevant to this main issue as these relate to new housing proposals.

Living conditions

14. The Council have raised concerns that the height of the proposal would harm the living conditions of the neighbouring occupiers at White Horse Barn, with the proposal creating a sense of enclosure. The proposal is not adding any additional height to the structure, but would change the roof style from a gable to hip roof, which would be visible from this neighbouring property. This change in itself would not result in any harm to the neighbouring occupiers outlook.
15. There is currently a high boundary fence between the two properties, with additional high vegetation. The outlook from this property towards the appeal site is currently of this high boundary wall, and as such there is limited visibility of the frontage stable from the ground floor. Whilst the proposal would be visible from the first floor, given the height of the frontage stable I do not consider that this would appear overbearing from these windows.
16. Furthermore, there is considerable separation distance between this neighbouring property and the appeal building. As such I do not consider that the proposal would be overbearing to occupiers of this neighbouring property.
17. The Council have indicated that as part of their consideration of the wider planning permission on this site, the removal of the stables was a positive factor for the outlook and living conditions of neighbouring occupiers, and there is an expectation that their outlook would be improved. Be this as it may, the proposal before me does not result in harm to the living conditions experienced by the neighbouring occupiers.
18. Accordingly, I find no conflict with Policies CP1 and CP3 of the CS. Together these policies seek, amongst other things, that development is of a high quality

design that does not cause detrimental harm to the amenities of adjoining land users. The Council has made reference to Policy R18 of the SPD, however this is not directly relevant to this issue as it relates to the design of new dwellings.

Other Matters

19. I note the concerns raised by interested parties in respect of the proposal, and the planning history of the site. This includes concerns with a non-material amendment² application, and potential breach of planning conditions. Matters relating to the original planning application for the erection of the two storey dwelling, and any alleged breach of planning conditions are a matter for the Council and are not within the remit of this appeal.
20. I note that reference has been made to an agreement between interested parties and the appellant to ensure the existing building which is the subject of this appeal is demolished. Such private agreements are not a planning matter, and do not fall within the scope of this appeal. Each application and appeal must be determined on its own planning merits, which is what I have done in this case.
21. I note the representations made in respect of the mature tree which bounds the appeal site. I understand from the evidence submitted that an arboricultural report was provided as part of the planning application for the construction of the dwelling. This highlighted there could be benefits to this tree through the removal of the frontage stable, which is located within its root protection area. These reports have not been provided as part of this appeal. In any event, whilst this may have been the conclusion of that report, I have been presented with no cogent evidence that the works arising from the proposal would harm the root protection area of this tree. The proposal before me are relatively minor and would not require any alterations to the existing concrete slab, nor any excavation works in the root protection area.

Conditions

22. 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 for the avoidance of doubt and in the interest of certainty. A condition relating to materials is necessary to ensure that the appearance of the dwelling is satisfactory. In the interest of precision, I have modified the Council's recommended condition in respect of landscaping. This condition is necessary to safeguard the surrounding landscape character.
23. The Council have recommended a condition in relation to surface water drainage. I do not find this is necessary as no changes are proposed in how surface water will be managed from this building. The Council have recommended a condition in respect of parking, with the reason given to ensure that adequate parking space is available on site. I do not find this necessary as it was evident from my site visit that there is adequate parking and turning space available on site. In any event, parking is covered by the landscaping condition.

Conclusions

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

² Planning reference 190289 approved 8 February 2019

S Shapland

INSPECTOR

SCHEDULE OF CONDITIONS – APP/X0360/W/20/3245882

- 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: AJT/01A Location and Named Roads Plan, OS Location Plan 1:2500, No.05 Stable block to North Plans Revision A, No.05 Stable block to North Floor Plans Revision A, No.06 Stable block to North elevations revision B, C-03 Site Plan as Proposed Revision H, C-100 Block Plans – Existing and Proposed, COND 1. Proposed soft landscape layout.
- 3) The external surfaces of the development hereby permitted shall be constructed in the materials shown on plan No.06 Stable block to North elevations revision B.
- 4) No part of the development shall be brought into use until details of both hard and soft landscape works have been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. These details shall include:
 - i) means of enclosure and boundary treatments;
 - ii) vehicle parking layouts;
 - iii) hard surfacing materials;
 - iv) minor artefacts and structures; and
 - v) retained or proposed landscape planting, where relevant;

Details of soft landscape works shall include planting plans; written specifications (including cultivation and other operations associated with plant and grass establishment); schedules of plants noting species, plant supply sizes and proposed numbers/densities where appropriate.
- 5) All hard landscaping works in the approved scheme shall be implemented prior to the building being brought into use. All planting, seeding or turfing comprised in the approved details of soft landscaping shall be carried out in the first planting and seeding seasons following the occupation of the building or the completion of the development, whichever is the sooner. Any trees or plants which within a period of 5 years from the completion of the development die, are removed or become seriously damaged or diseased shall be replaced in the next planting season with others of similar size and species.