



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 2 September 2020

by Rachel Walmsley BSc MSc MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 15 September 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/W0340/20/3249861

Clifton House, Unnamed Road from Beckfords to Pangbourne Road, Upper Basildon, Reading RG8 8LU

- 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 Stephen Orton and Mrs Karen Lally against the decision of West Berkshire Council.
 - The application Ref 19/02700/HOUSE, dated 28 October 2019, was refused by notice dated 21 February 2020.
 - The development proposed is retrospective application for amendments to 4 dormers following refusal 19/00517.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and retrospective planning permission is granted for amendments to 4 dormers following refusal 19/00517 at Clifton House, Unnamed Road from Beckfords to Pangbourne Road, Upper Basildon, Reading RG8 8LU in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref 19/02700/HOUSE dated 28 October 2019, and the plans and details submitted with it, subject to the following conditions:
 - i) The development hereby permitted shall be implemented and completed before the expiration of twelve months from the date of this permission.
 - ii) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans; S.East Elevation 544 05-22 AP; S.West Elevation 544 05-23 AP; N.West Elevation 544 05-21 AP; and N.East Elevation 544 05-20 AP.
 - iii) The materials to be used in the development hereby permitted shall be as specified on the approved plans and application form. Where stated that the materials shall match the existing, those materials shall match those on the existing development in colour, size and texture.
 - iv) The dormer window on the south-west elevation hereby permitted shall be fitted with obscured glazing, and no part of the window that is less than 1.7 metres above the floor of the room in which it is installed shall be capable of being opened. Once implemented, the obscured glazing and fixed element shall be retained thereafter.

Procedural matter

2. At the time of my site visit, four dormer windows were in situ. The appeal proposal seeks planning permission for four such windows but different in size and design to those on site. I have therefore considered the appeal on the basis of the submitted drawings.

Main Issues

3. These are:
 - (i) the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area and on the character and setting of the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB); and,
 - (ii) the effect of the proposal on the living conditions of the occupiers of neighbouring properties, with particular regard to overlooking.

Reasons

Character and appearance

4. The appeal property is in the village of Upper Basildon. The area surrounding the appeal site is dominated by large properties within spacious plots. The properties vary in form, scale and character, albeit the appeal property shares a form, scale and vernacular with a neighbouring house. The variety in properties is a striking quality of the village. Clifton House is in a prominent location, overlooking the village green and visible from surrounding roads. Combined with its scale, the property makes a notable and positive contribution to the character and appearance of the area.
5. The AONB is characterised by long distance views out from and towards the village. Because of the relief of the land and extensive tree cover, views of the village within the AONB are limited. Equally limited are the views of the appeal site because of its position, surrounded by built development. Nevertheless, the appeal property is an important part of the rural village environment which is one of the special qualities of the AONB.
6. I saw on site that the neighbouring property, which is similar in design to Clifton House, exhibits a dormer window. I understand that the original planning permission for the property includes a condition which precludes additional windows. I have no details of this permission or the reasons for this condition. Similarly, there is nothing within the evidence before me, to include planning policy, to suggest that dormer windows are prohibited. As such, I find that the principle of dormer windows on the property is acceptable.
7. On all four roof elevations of the appeal property, the dormer windows would be set down from the ridge line and would occupy a modest area of the roof space. The size of the dormers would respect the size of the windows elsewhere on the property; small in scale to complement their position on the roof and not dwarf the windows at ground and first floor level. Equally complementary would be the size and design of the glazing which would respect the size and design of the glazing in the existing windows.
8. The cills of dormers 2 and 3 would be directly above the apex of the gable below. Whilst this appears as a slightly awkward and cramped juxtaposition, it

does not detract from the overall form, scale and appearance of the appeal dwelling to be considered harmful to its character and appearance.

9. All in all, the windows would complement the form, scale and architectural expression of the existing property. In turn, the development would not appear unduly overbearing or incongruous in character to be considered harmful to the character and appearance of the area or to the setting and distinctiveness of the AONB. As such, the proposal complies with policies CS14, CS19 and ADPP5 of the Core Strategy¹, policy C3 of the DPD², and the Design Statement³ and Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG)⁴ which seek development that conserves, respects and enhances the character and appearance of the area and local distinctiveness.

Living conditions

10. The dormer on the south-east elevation overlooks the village green which is a recreational area that is accessible to the public. There is, therefore, no direct overlooking that could be considered an invasion of privacy.
11. The dormer window on the north-east elevation of the appeal property overlooks a road and a house and garden. Views of the latter are possible from the dormer window but this relationship is no more harmful than the overlooking that exists from the first floor windows of Clifton House. Notwithstanding this, the distance between the dormer window and the property exceeds the distance recommended in the SPG such that any overlooking would not be harmful to occupiers living conditions.
12. The dormer window on the north-west elevation overlooks two properties. However, there is a notable level of vegetation which screens views. There are no primary areas of garden or windows in the neighbouring properties that are within an unreasonable distance of the appeal property or that directly overlook the latter for the proposal to be considered harmful to privacy.
13. The dormer window on the south-west elevation overlooks a neighbouring property that has windows that overlook Clifton House. However, these windows are obscure glazed. Together with the appellant accepting a condition that stipulates obscure glazing and the restricted opening of the dormer window, any potential harm to the living conditions of neighbouring occupiers as a result of overlooking would be mitigated. A condition to ensure that the window was retained in this way is reasonable.
14. In all, therefore, with an appropriate condition in place, I find that the development would not be contrary to policy CS14 of the Core Strategy and the National Planning Policy Framework which seek development that secures a good standard of amenity for all.

Other matters

15. Notwithstanding the extent to which the development amends previous proposals, the appeal proposal seeks permission for the dormer windows as shown on the submitted drawings. For the reasons given above, I have found no harm.

¹ West Berkshire Core Strategy (2006-2026) Development Plan Document (adopted July 2012)

² West Berkshire Council, Housing Site Allocations DPD (2006-2026) adopted May 2017

³ Village Design Statement for Basildon, Approved Supplementary Planning Guidance, 13 March 2001

⁴ West Berkshire Council, House Extensions, Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG), July 2004

16. I understand the concerns raised by residents for the unauthorised development on site and any precedent that this may set. However, it is not within the remit of this appeal for me to comment on the Council's decision-making and enforcement processes.

Conditions

17. I have considered the Council's suggested conditions in light of the advice in the National Planning Practice Guidance. A time limit condition and a plans condition are necessary to ensure that the development is carried within a reasonable time frame and in accordance with the approved plans for the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning. I have specified a condition relating to materials in the interest of the character and appearance of the area. In the interests of protecting the living conditions of the occupiers of a neighbouring property, I have specified a condition concerning obscure glazing and non-openable windows.

Conclusion

18. For the above reasons given above, and having due regard to all other matters raised, the proposal would not be contrary to the development plan and therefore the appeal is allowed, subject to the conditions specified.

R Walmsley

INSPECTOR

