



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 10 September 2020

by S Shapland BSc (Hons) MSc CMILT MCIHT

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 28 September 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/W0340/D/20/3255069

Greenhill Cottage, Hampstead Norreys, West Berkshire RG18 0TE

- 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 Ms Natasha Bailey against the decision of West Berkshire Council.
 - The application Ref 20/00708/HOUSE, dated 16 March 2020, was refused by notice dated 19 June 2020.
 - The development proposed is erection of first floor rear extension (above existing ground floor structure), erection of double storey side extension (partially above existing ground floor structure), installation of new replacement windows throughout, replacement kitchen door (external) and new bi-fold doors in rear elevation to serve living room, new window on existing front façade to 1st floor landing to stairs.
-

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

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 Hampstead Norreys Conservation Area and North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty; and
 - highway safety

Reasons

Character and appearance

3. The appeal site comprises a modest two storey detached cottage located adjacent to Forge Hill within the village of Hampstead Norreys. The existing cottage is of a traditional design, which includes a single storey side element. The appeal site is within the Hampstead Norreys Conservation Area (CA), which is an area characterised as having traditional red brick buildings, of a variety of scales and design. The appeal site is also located within the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).
4. The appeal proposal is for a two storey side extension which would have the same roof height as the existing dwelling. The proposal would also include a single storey rear extension, as well as replacement windows throughout. A new window would be installed on the existing front elevation of the cottage above the front door.

5. Policy C6 of the West Berkshire Housing Site Allocations DPD states that for extensions of existing dwellings there is a presumption in favour of proposal for the extension of existing permanent dwellings. This is subject to a number of criteria which includes ensuring that the scale of the enlargement is subservient to the original dwelling and is designed to be in character with the existing dwelling.
6. The proposed two storey side extension is of a considerable scale when considered against the existing somewhat modest size of the host dwelling. The roof height of the extension would be the same height as existing. Furthermore, the additions would be in line with the front elevation of the existing dwelling. As a result, the proposal does not appear subservient to the host dwelling. This lack of subservience means the proposal would appear as a somewhat dominating addition to the cottage, and is not of a scale which is in keeping with the host dwelling.
7. I recognise the appellants comments that the Council's house extension SPD allows in some instances for continuous roof heights for side extensions. However, in this instance it is my view that the design of continuous roof height does not respect the host dwelling and harms its character and appearance. I note the concerns that given the low ceiling heights of the existing cottage, this may create issues in designing a scheme which is subservient. However, subservience can be achieved through other measures not just a reduction in roof height. In this instance I find that the lack of subservice and scale of the proposal harms the character and appearance of the dwelling.
8. Section 72 (1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (the Act) requires me to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character and appearance of CAs. Paragraph 193 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) states that when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation. Annex 2: Glossary of the Framework confirms that CAs are included within the definition of a designated heritage asset.
9. The proposed extension would harm the character and appearance of the host dwelling. The resultant design of the proposal would not be in keeping with the surrounding dwellings within the CA and would result in harm to the street scene in this location. As such the proposal neither conserves nor enhances the character or appearance of the CA. It is considered that given the scale of the proposal this will cause less than substantial harm to a designated heritage asset.
10. Paragraph 196 of the Framework states that where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal. The appellant contends that the existing dwelling is in a poor state of repair, and the proposal would allow for both the renovation and conservation of this cottage. Whilst on site I observed the condition of the dwelling, and it did appear in a state of disrepair. Renovation work would provide some small benefit to the character and appearance of the street scene, however the proposals go far beyond simple renovation works and create a much larger dwelling which is to the detriment of the character of the host dwelling and

street scene. This limits the weight this has in favour of the proposal. Consequently, these benefits do not outweigh the harm I have identified above to the character and appearance of the CA.

11. As the appeal site is located within an 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 Framework specifies that great weight must be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty of these areas.
12. Whilst I have found that the appeal proposal would harm the character and appearance of the area, the site is within an existing residential area. As such the impact of the proposal would be localised to the vicinity of the appeal site and would not harm the wider AONB. As such the proposal would conserve the beauty of the AONB and does not conflict with paragraph 172 of the Framework.
13. Accordingly, I find that the proposal would harm the character and appearance of the area, and fails to conserve or enhance the character and appearance of the CA. It would conflict with policy CS14 of the West Berkshire Core Strategy 2006-2026 (CS) CS, and policies C3 and C6 of the DPD. Together these policies seek, amongst other things, that residential extensions are of a high quality design which is subservient to the original dwelling. There is also conflict with policy CS19 of the CS which seeks, amongst other things, that proposals conserve and enhance heritage assets. The proposal also conflicts with paragraphs 192, 193 and 196 of the Framework which seeks, amongst other things that development enhance the significance of heritage assets.

Highway safety

14. The Council have raised concerns that the proposed layout of the parking areas would result in vehicles reversing either from or onto the B4009, which would adversely impact road safety. I do not find this to be the case. During my site visit I observed that vehicular speeds on Forge Hill were generally low, and there is good forward visibility along the highway which would allow ample visibility of any vehicle manoeuvring on or off the driveway. Furthermore, it was evident that there are a number of properties in close vicinity to the appeal site which had driveways which took direct access from the highway. The majority of these did not have a space which would allow a vehicle to turn around and leave in a forward gear.
15. This would mean that currently a number of properties can only be accessed by either reversing on or off of these driveways. I have been presented with no accident data from the Council to indicate to me that these manoeuvres have resulted in harm to highway safety. Consequently, I cannot conclude that the proposal would lead to any increase in harm to highway safety. As such there is no conflict with policy CS13 of the CS and policy P1 of the DPD. Together these policies seek, amongst other things, that development provides adequate parking provision and does not harm road safety.

Other matters

16. I note the appellants desire to have enlarged living accommodation, and an additional guest bedroom to allow their parents to visit and stay overnight.

However, such personal circumstance do not outweigh the planning considerations and the harm I have identified above.

Conclusions

17. Whilst I have found the proposal would not harm highway safety, I have found that it would harm the character and appearance of the host dwelling and surrounding area, including the Hampstead Norreys Conservation Area. For the reasons given above the appeal is dismissed.

S Shapland

INSPECTOR