



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 1 September 2020 by Alex O'Doherty LLB(Hons) MSc MRTPI

Decision by R C Kirby BA (Hons) DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 29 September 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/K0425/D/20/3249909

204 Marlow Bottom Road, Marlow Bottom SL7 3PR

- 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 & Mrs Taylor against the decision of Wycombe District Council.
 - The application Ref 19/07958/FUL, dated 9 December 2019, was refused by notice dated 5 February 2020.
 - The development proposed is described as, "New car port & crossover, alterations to the existing entrance porch & the extension of the existing roof structure to provide additional first floor accommodation."
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Appeal Procedure

2. The site visit was undertaken by an Appeal Planning Officer whose recommendation is set out below and to which the Inspector has had regard before deciding the appeal.

Procedural Matters

3. On 1 April 2020 the name of the decision-making authority changed from Wycombe District Council to Buckinghamshire Council.
4. The Council's decision notice refers to Policy DM20 of the Wycombe District Local Plan (adopted August 2019) ('Local Plan'). However, that policy relates to matters which are not proposed in this appeal, and therefore that policy is not relevant to my assessment of the proposed development and the determination of the appeal.
5. The description of development in the heading above has been taken from the planning application form. However, in Part E of the appeal form it is stated that the description of development has not changed but, nevertheless, a different wording has been entered. The description of development given in the Council's decision notice is: "Householder application for construction of car port & crossover. Alterations to the existing entrance porch and side/rear box dormer extension to existing roof structure, alterations to fenestrations". This is the description used to determine the application. As that description more accurately describes the proposal, the appeal has also been determined using that description of development.

6. It is clear from the Council's decision that it has no objection to the construction of the car port and the crossover, the alterations to the existing entrance porch, and the alterations to fenestrations. I have no evidence before me to reach a contrary view to the Council in this regard and therefore the consideration of this appeal focuses on the effect of the side/rear box dormer extension to the existing roof structure.

Main Issue

7. The main issue is the effect of the side/rear box dormer extension on the character and appearance of the host property and the surrounding area, having particular regard to any effect on the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty ('AONB').

Reasons for the Recommendation

8. The appeal property is a detached chalet-style dwelling, located in an elevated and set-back position from the road. The dwelling has been extended to the side at ground-floor level, up to the boundary with No 206 Marlow Bottom Road ('No 206'). A flat-roofed dormer, with its roof set above the ridge height of the host property, is present on the opposite site of the property.
9. The appeal property is sat amongst several similarly designed bungalows found on the east side of Marlow Bottom Road. Many have been altered in various ways, but I observed that the gap present between the appeal property and No 206, at first-floor level, is mirrored at both pairs of properties which are immediately adjacent, on this side of the road. These gaps provide visual relief from the mass of built form in the area and provide important views to both the hillside and the woodland beyond.
10. The side extension element of the proposal has been designed to mirror the height of the existing side dormer. It would not overhang the existing ground floor and would be set back from the front elevation. It would extend horizontally from the apex of the host property's roof across a substantial portion of the host property, and across the full width of the existing ground-floor side extension. The resulting effect would be to create an overly large new structure which would engulf the host property. It would appear incongruous when viewed alongside the existing dormer, which would be much smaller in comparison.
11. The topography of the site and the pitch of the roof¹ would not, in my view, sufficiently off-set the harm arising due to the significant bulk and massing of the proposal. It is recognised that the overall area of flat roof would not increase², but as the new roof line would be above the ridge height of the host property, it would be far more noticeable.
12. Further, the proposal would erode a material portion of the open aspect which is present between the host property and No 206, which is an evident characteristic of the immediate vicinity. A sizeable portion of the views to the hillside and the woodland would be obscured by the proposal, thereby harming the character of the area. The additional separation potentially created by the car port element of the proposal³ would not be sufficient to off-set this harm.

¹ Assessed in the appellants' Appendix A

² Assessed in the appellants' Appendix C

³ Assessed in the appellants' Appendix E

13. The rear element of the proposal would also be set above the ridge height of the host property and would extend significantly to the side. It would entail a bulky addition that would not harmonise with either the existing dwelling, or the immediately adjacent properties. I observed the presence of a large rear dormer at No 208 Marlow Bottom Road, but extensions in the immediate vicinity are predominantly subservient to their host properties, in contrast to the appeal proposal. It is recognised that views of the proposal from public vantage points to the rear would be minimal⁴, but this would not negate the negative effect of the proposal on the host property itself, nor its effect when seen from the gardens of nearby properties.
14. I observed all of the examples on Marlow Bottom Road, which the appellants referred to⁵. These examples are of varying designs and in several cases the immediate context is materially different to that at the appeal site. Accordingly, they do not change my view regarding the effect of the proposal. The appellants also referred to two previous grants of planning permission⁶. However, those approvals were granted under a different policy context and therefore have been given limited weight.
15. In accordance with paragraph 172 of the National Planning Policy Framework ('the Framework'), great weight must be given to conserving and enhancing the landscape and scenic beauty of the AONB. As the impact of the proposal at landscape scale would be minimal, the proposal would have a neutral effect on the AONB and would not conflict with the Framework in this respect.
16. Nevertheless, whilst matching materials would be used where possible throughout the proposal, for the reasons described above, the side/rear box dormer extension would have an unacceptable and harmful effect on the character and appearance of the host property and the surrounding area. As such, the proposal would conflict with Policies CP1, CP9, DM35, and DM36 of the Local Plan which collectively require development to achieve a high quality of design which contributes positively to making places better for people and which takes the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area and the way it functions. There would also be conflict with the guidance given in the Householder Planning and Design Guidance Supplementary Planning Document (adopted January 2020) ('SPD'). Rather than improving the property, the proposal would have a serious impact on the appearance of the dwelling, which the SPD seeks to avoid.

Other Matters

17. The lack of objections from neighbours, the local Councillor, and Marlow Bottom Parish Council is noted, but this is a neutral factor in my consideration of the proposal. Concerns relating to how the planning application was dealt with are not matters that I can assess in the context of a planning appeal. The proposal would improve the living accommodation available to the appellants. However, as this would mainly be a private benefit, this has been given very limited weight.

⁴ Assessed in the appellants' Appendix F

⁵ Appellants' Appendix B and Appendix D

⁶ 99/06151/FUL and 02/07769/FUL

18. In conclusion, I find that the matters advanced in support of the proposal, do not, either individually or collectively, outweigh the harm identified, nor the conflict with the development plan.

Conclusion and Recommendation

19. Based on the above, and having regard to all matters raised, I recommend that the appeal should be dismissed.

Alex O'Doherty

APPEAL PLANNING OFFICER

Inspector's Decision

20. I have considered all the submitted evidence and the Appeal Planning Officer's report and on that basis the appeal is dismissed.

RC Kirby

INSPECTOR