
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 23 February 2021

by S Leonard BA (Hons) BTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 04 March 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/Y9507/D/20/3262454
15 Pulens Crescent, Petersfield GU31 4DW

- 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 and Mrs Andrew McClung against the decision of South Downs National Park Authority.
 - The application Ref SDNP/20/02297/HOUS, dated 8 June 2020, was refused by notice dated 18 August 2020.
 - The development proposed is first floor rear extension.
-

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposed extension on the supply of small and medium-sized homes within the National Park.

Reasons

3. The appeal site lies on the west side of Pulens Crescent in an established suburban residential area in Petersfield, which is within the designated settlement policy boundary and the South Downs National Park (SDNP). The road is characterised by a mix of single and two-storey detached late 20th century dwellings.
4. The property is a two-storey detached dwelling, finished in brick walls under a tiled hipped roof, and set within a plot with a long back garden. It has side/rear single-storey flat-roofed additions, granted in May 2016 under application Ref SDNP/16/01327/HOUS. These extend across the full width of the building and infill the original L-shaped two-storey building footprint. The appeal proposal would be positioned above most of the existing single storey building, and would replace an existing first floor subsidiary rear projection with a structure whose hipped roof height would match that of the main roof.
5. Policy SD31 of the *South Downs Local Plan 2014-2033* (2019) (the Local Plan) places a restriction on the size of dwelling extensions, having regard to the need to protect the limited supply of small and medium-sized homes in the SDNP, and the adverse impact that over-extension of dwellings has on the character and appearance of both settlements and the countryside. The policy permits proposals for extensions to existing dwellings where, amongst other criteria, the proposal does not increase the gross internal area (GIA) of the existing dwelling by more than approximately 30%, unless there are

exceptional circumstances. It takes account of the impact of cumulative additions. In the case of the appeal property, the 'existing dwelling' is the residential unit that existed on 18 December 2002.

6. The Council's reason for refusal states that the proposal would result in a floorspace increase of approximately 62%, based on the dwelling in 2002 measuring approximately 107 square metres and the dwelling as proposed measuring approximately 172 square metres. This takes account of the aforementioned single storey extensions. I concur with the appellants that, based on these floorspace figures, the percentage increase would amount to 60.7%.
7. More significantly, the appellants disagree with the floorspace figures contained within the Council's reason for refusal. Their view is that the 2002 GIA was 115 square metres (comprising the original house and a sun lounge approved in 1979 under permission Ref 24537), and that the proposed GIA is 159 square metres. Using these figures, the percentage increase in GIA above that of the 'existing dwelling' for the purposes of Policy SD31 would be 38%.
8. I do not have sufficient information before me from either of the main parties to enable me to reach a conclusive view on the correct floorspace figures for the purposes of assessing the appeal scheme against criterion 1 a) of Policy SD31. Whilst there is a marked difference between the percentage increase figures of both parties, there is, nonetheless, agreement that the policy threshold would be exceeded.
9. Even taking the best-case scenario of the appellants' figure, I consider that an 8% difference over the policy stipulation would be too large to be considered 'approximate' to 30%. To my mind this term would allow for rounding up or down to the nearest whole number.
10. Also, having regard to the aims of Policy SD31 in respect of the impact of extensions on the supply of small and medium-sized homes within the SDNP, the proposal would result in a notable increase in building size above that of the 2002 property, changing it from a 3-bedroomed property to a 4-bedroomed property, including 2 bathrooms and a dressing room at first floor.
11. I have taken account of the post-policy explanatory paragraphs which state that the Council may permit larger proposals where it can be clearly demonstrated that there will be no harmful intrusive impact in the landscape and that there is an enhancement in the appearance of the host dwelling. Also, larger extensions that are needed to accommodate exceptional family needs will be considered, subject to robust supporting evidence.
12. I am mindful of the statutory purposes of the National Park Designation, and advice within paragraph 172 of the *National Planning Policy Framework 2019* (the Framework) to give great weight to the conservation and enhancement of landscape and scenic beauty. As the proposed extension would amount to building over an existing ground floor extension at the rear of the dwelling within an urban housing area, with materials and a roof form to match the host property, I find that it would not materially harm the wider landscape or scenic beauty of the SDNP.
13. The proposal would replace the existing flat roofed single storey rear projection with an extension with a roof form more in keeping with that of the original

dwelling. However, I do not find that the existing extension is unduly harmful to the character and appearance of the host property. It benefits from planning permission, and is not visually intrusive in views of the property from the public realm. It is subservient in scale to the main dwelling and built of matching brickwork, and the large glazed element gives it a contemporary appearance which contrasts with the host property but is not necessarily harmful. As such, I do not find that benefits to the appearance of the host property in this instance would warrant allowing a larger than stipulated extension.

14. The appellants have not presented any exceptional family needs that would warrant an increase of above the Policy SD31 floorspace restriction. I have had regard to the previous grant of planning permission Ref SDNP/15/01115/HOUS in April 2015, for a rear two storey extension of a similar size and design to that which would result from the appeal proposal. However, this permission was not implemented and has expired. As such, it does not represent a fallback position that would justify the appeal scheme. Also, it was granted prior to the adoption of the current Local Plan, when the previous relevant development plan policies did not include a floorspace restriction in respect to residential extensions within the SDNP. Accordingly, I am not persuaded that there are 'exceptional circumstances' that would justify a larger percentage floor area increase.
15. The Council has raised no objection to the proposal having regard to its impact on the character of the area and the living conditions of neighbouring residents. However, these are requirements of Policy SD31 in any case.
16. For the above reasons, having regard to the lack of cogent evidence before me in respect of the relevant floorspace figures, and taking a precautionary approach, I am unable to conclude that the proposal would accord with Local Plan Policy SD31, in so far as the policy aims to avoid the over-extension of dwellings in order to protect the limited supply of small and medium-sized homes in the SDNP. There are no other material considerations that would outweigh this conflict with Policy SD31.

Other Matters

17. The appellants have questioned whether the Council's determination of an amended application, incorporating a small and acceptable reduction in floorspace, would be an efficient use of Council resources. Notwithstanding that this view is based on the appellants' floorspace figures, with which the Council do not agree, this is not a matter for consideration as part of my determination of the appeal.

Conclusion

18. For the above reasons, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

S Leonard

INSPECTOR