



Appeal Decision

Site Visit made on 19 July 2021

by Mr James Blackwell LLB (Hons)

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 3rd August 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/X0360/D/21/3273618

11 Old Bath Road, Charvil, Reading RG10 9QP

- 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 Mundi against the decision of Wokingham Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 203586, dated 22 December 2020, was refused by notice dated 3 February 2021.
 - The development proposed is the demolition of existing garage, removal of existing first floor and erection of a single/two storey rear extension, two storey side extension and new first floor extension.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. Since determination of the planning application, the 2019 iteration of the National Planning Policy Framework (Framework) has been superseded. I am satisfied that the updates to the Framework do not materially affect its content insofar as it is relevant to the main issues of this appeal, so I have therefore determined this appeal with regard to the latest version.

Main Issues

3. The main issues are:
 - the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the area; and
 - the effect of the proposed development on the living conditions of the occupiers of Nos 9 and 15 Old Bath Road, with particular regard to outlook.

Reasons

Character and appearance

4. The appeal property is a detached bungalow located on the northern side of Old Bath Road. It has a hipped roof and a single storey gable which projects slightly forward from its main frontage. There is a separate detached garage adjacent to the eastern elevation of the property. No 9 to the west of the appeal dwelling, is also a bungalow, which is similar in size and height. No 15 sits to the east of the appeal dwelling, and is a chalet style bungalow, again similar in terms of height and footprint. Whilst the design of the three dwellings

does vary, their overall size and scale is relatively consistent when viewed from the road which contributes positively to the street scene. The wider area is mostly residential and includes a mixture of house types.

5. The proposed development would reconfigure the existing dwelling by increasing its height to incorporate a full second storey over the main bulk of the dwelling. It would also include a single storey side and rear extension, which would wrap around the western side of the dwelling and the full width of its rear. Given the extent of the alterations proposed, the development would not be subservient to the existing dwelling. Instead, it would fundamentally change its character from a modest bungalow to a large two-storey house. Given the size and scale of the adjacent properties in which second floors are accommodated within the pitch of their roof space, the additional height and bulk of the proposed second floor would appear dominant and incongruous in the context of these properties. The proposed development would also introduce a two-storey gable feature at the centre of the property's frontage, which would exacerbate the visual prominence of the additional storey. Both factors would be harmful to the street scene.
6. Whilst there are examples of larger two storey houses near to the appeal property, these are located further down the road or else on the opposite side of the road. In both cases, the surrounding context is different, as they are not bordered on either side by properties which are significantly more modest in size. This means the additional storeys can be accommodated without appearing overly dominant in the street scene.
7. The dwellings along the northern side of Old Bath Road are arranged in a stepped formation, with No 9 stepped slightly forward from the appeal dwelling, and No 15 slightly back. This means the properties along this side of the road follow a very clear building line which is readily apparent at the rear of the properties. The two-storey element of the proposed development would extend out very close to the rear building line of No 15, diminishing the clear step between the properties. The single storey element would then project out even further. This would significantly interrupt the established grain of development along this side of the road, which would detract from the appearance of these properties, particularly at their rear.
8. For these reasons, the proposed development would harm the character and appearance of the area. The development would therefore conflict with Policies CP1 and CP3 of the Wokingham Borough Local Development Framework, Adopted Core Strategy Development Plan Document (2010) (CS), which seek to ensure new development maintains or enhances the quality of its surrounding environment through appropriate scale, mass and level of built form. The development would also conflict with R23 of the Wokingham Borough Council, Borough Design Guide, Supplementary Planning Document (2012) (Borough Design Guide), which requires home extensions to be well designed, to respond positively to neighbouring properties and to contribute positively to local character. The Borough Design Guide is also explicit that extensions should appear subservient to the form and scale of the original building. Finally, the development would conflict with the overarching design objectives of the National Design Guide and the National Planning Policy Framework (July 2021) (Framework).

Living conditions

9. Due to the modest size, orientation and established rear building line of the properties along the northern side of the road, both Nos 9 and No 15 currently benefit from a strong feeling of openness at their rear. The two-storey element of the proposed development would extend out much further than the current rear elevation of the appeal property. In terms of No 9, even accounting for the gap between the two-storey element and the shared boundary, the increased height, depth and bulk of this second storey would significantly detract from the feeling of openness between these properties, which would have an overbearing impact in its garden. The proposed single-storey side and rear extension would also extend out even further, running along the shared boundary between the two properties. This would lead to a feeling of enclosure within the garden of No 9, which would further exacerbate this impact.
10. For the same reasons, the additional height and bulk of the new second storey would also have an overbearing impact on No 15, particularly on its patio area, as the sense of openness at the rear of this property would be lost. Whilst I acknowledge No 15 has itself been extended to incorporate a second storey, this is accommodated within a flat roof rear dormer which is subservient to the host dwelling, which means it is significantly less bulky. It also adheres to the established rear building line, which means it does not cause any unacceptable impact on the amenity space of its neighbouring properties.
11. For these reasons, the development would harm the living conditions of the occupants of Nos 9 and 15 and would therefore conflict with CS Policies CP1 and CP3 and section 4 of the Borough Design Guide. Together, these policies and guidance require new development to achieve high-quality design which relates well to neighbouring properties, and which protects the amenity of neighbouring occupiers.

Other Matters

12. The appellant contends that the Core Strategy is out of date, as it was adopted before the latest iteration of the Framework. Nonetheless, the plan period runs until 2026, and I am satisfied that the policies cited by the Council in its reasons for refusal remain consistent with the latest version of the Framework insofar as they are relevant to the main issues of this appeal. Whilst I note the development would be consistent with certain requirements of CS Policies CP1 and CP3, it would nonetheless conflict with fundamental limbs of these policies, due to its failure to protect the character of the area.
13. The appellant makes reference to benefits that would result from the development, and also contends that it would represent an effective use of land in accordance with advice provided by the Framework. Whilst I accept the scheme might have certain merits, taken together, these would not outweigh the harm that would be caused to the character and appearance of the area nor to the living conditions of neighbouring occupiers which have been highlighted above.

Conclusion

14. I have found harm on both main issues, which is compelling. For the reasons given above and having had regard to all other matters raised and the development plan as a whole, the appeal is dismissed.

James Blackwell

INSPECTOR