



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 26 April 2022

by J J Evans BA (Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 19 July 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/W0340/W/22/3293994

Holly Tree Cottage, Lower Green, Inkpen, Hungerford RG17 9DW

- 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 Gorman against the decision of West Berkshire Council.
 - The application Ref 21/02581/HOUSE, dated 11 October 2021, was refused by notice dated 7 December 2021.
 - The development proposed is the erection of front porch, single storey rear and two storey rear extensions (revised).
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matters

2. The Council referred to the appeal proposal as being Schedule 2 development as described in Column 1, Schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2011. However, the Council have subsequently explained that this was a mistake in the completion of the appeal questionnaire and have confirmed that the development is not Schedule 2 development. I have considered the appeal on this basis.

Main Issues

3. The main issues are the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the host dwelling and upon the surrounding area; and the effect of the proposed development on protected species.

Reasons

Character and Appearance

4. The appeal property is a detached dwelling within the village of Inkpen. Like many of the nearby properties, Holly Tree Cottage is set back from the public highway behind a deep front garden. The presence of mostly detached buildings set back from the highway within generous gardens is a distinct feature of the village. This and the separation between the buildings, along with the close proximity of fields to the rear of the properties gives an attractive, loose-knit and verdant appearance to the village.

5. Constructed of brick under a tiled roof, Holly Tree Cottage is visible within the surrounding area as it occupies an elevated position above the public highway. It forms part of an attractive row of mostly historic buildings to the eastern side of the road. The high quality, traditional styles and forms of these houses, along with their generous gardens, contributes towards the spacious appearance of the village.
6. The proposed extensions comprise a larger replacement porch to the front elevation of the house, along with two and single storey rear extensions. The porch would replace that already present, albeit it would be broader and deeper than the existing one. The replacement porch would be constructed of materials to match the existing building, and this and its style would maintain the traditional appearance of the front of the house, having a legible subservience to the host. As such the porch would neither harm the character and appearance of the host building nor the contribution it makes to the surrounding area.
7. Turning now to the proposed single and two storey rear extensions, together these would combine to form large and bulky additions to the host building. The two storey element would be set down from the existing ridge, with the roof slope being similar to that on the dormer. Notwithstanding this, when taken together with the single storey element, the cumulative impact of the extensions would be a dominant addition to the host. Although the original dwelling has been extended with a two storey side extension, the simple linear form of the house has been maintained. The combined size of the rear extensions and their degree of projection from the rear elevation would create an overly large addition to the host building, and one which would unacceptably erode the house's essentially plain, linear form.
8. Furthermore, the extensions would also have a complexity of form and introduce stylistic features that would harmfully clash with the modest, simple appearance of the host building. There are a variety of ages and styles of houses nearby, but in most cases these properties have a traditional appearance which contributes to the cohesive appearance of the village. The rear extensions would have a strong contemporary style, introducing a number of features that would be an incongruous juxtaposition to the simple appearance of the host. The provision of a Juliet balcony, the deep, wide flat roof, and the dominance of the glazing on the single storey extension, would not only exaggerate the size of the extensions, but would have little harmony with the existing building. Furthermore, the proposed eaves would be raised well above the existing ones, and whilst this may be needed to provide internal space, it nevertheless serves to exaggerate the discordancy that would exist between the host building and the extensions.
9. The existing house has an attractive simplicity that positively contributes to the character and appearance of the village. Even though the extensions would be to the rear, they would be visible from the public realm, including from the nearby public right of way. Moreover, the village is within the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), and the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) requires that great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing the scenic beauty of AONBs. The verdant, spacious appearance of the village, with the prevalence of traditionally styled dwellings is part of the scenic beauty of the AONB. The rear extensions would not be prominent, but due to their size and conflicting relationship with their

host, they would erode the scenic beauty of the AONB, contrary to the requirements of Policy ADPP5 of the West Berkshire Core Strategy (2012) (CS). I note the appellant considers the Council have misinterpreted the application of this policy. However, as this policy seeks amongst other things, that development will conserve and enhance the local distinctiveness of the AONB, for the reasons given the proposal would fail to accord with this policy.

10. The appellant has also questioned the Council's interpretation and application of Policy C6 of the Housing Site Allocations Development Plan Document (2017) (DPD). This policy requires, amongst other things, that the scale of the enlargement is subservient to the original dwelling and that it is designed to be in character with the existing dwelling. The house has been previously extended, albeit the essential linear form and simple style of the original dwelling has been retained. The size of the proposed rear extensions would when combined with the existing two storey side extension would be an overwhelming addition when compared to the modest dimensions of the original dwelling. In addition, the form and style of the rear extensions would have little harmony with either the character or appearance of the existing dwelling. Consequently, the rear extensions would fail to accord with this policy with regard to scale and design.
11. The rear extensions would also fail to accord with other CS and DPD policies, namely CS Policies CS14 and CS19, and DPD Policy C3, and the supporting guidance in the Quality Design Supplementary Planning Document (2006) and House Extensions Supplementary Planning Guidance (2004). These seek amongst other things, high quality development that respects and enhances the character and appearance of an area, including responding to local distinctiveness, thereby reflecting objectives of the Framework. Having regard to my findings and the nature of the rear extensions, the suggested conditions would not ameliorate the significant harm that would arise.
12. The Council have referred to CS Policy ADPP1. However, as this policy is concerned with strategic housing development it has little bearing on the proposal before me.

Protected Species

13. A distinct characteristic of the village is the presence of generously sized residential gardens close to fields and public open spaces. The appeal property is not part of a designated nature conservation site, but nearby there are paddocks and fields, watercourses, woodlands and hedgerows, and the property is also close to a local biodiversity opportunity area. Given this context, it was not unreasonable of the Council to request the provision of a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) so as to be able to assess the potential ecological impacts, if any, that may arise from the development.
14. Whilst the appellant considers the extensions would not result in the significant biodiversity harm referred to in the Framework, Circular 06/2005 – Biodiversity and Geological Conservation makes it clear that the presence of a protected species is a material consideration when a development is being considered. Having regard to the context of the appeal proposal in a predominantly rural area where there are a variety of habitats nearby, it cannot be assumed that protected species would neither be present on the site or in the vicinity. Furthermore, the proposal would necessitate the removal of a large section of the rear roof slope as well as the demolition of the existing porch, and it cannot

be assumed that such works would not impact upon protected species such as bats. Circular 06/2005 states that it is essential that the presence or otherwise of a protected species, and the extent they may be affected by proposed development, is established before the grant of permission, so as to ensure that all relevant material considerations have been addressed in making the decision. In the absence of any survey, the impact of the proposal upon any protected species in or near the site cannot be assessed.

15. The appellant has drawn my attention to the proposal being almost directly comparable to development which would comprise permitted development. However, the house has been previously extended and is also within an AONB, both of which would restrict the level of permitted development that could be undertaken to the house. Consequently, such a comparison has little bearing given the circumstances of this case.
16. As regards the consistency of the Council's requirements for requesting PEAs on nearby properties, I have very little detail of these permissions to assess for what reasons the surveys were not required. In the absence of any such evidence, whether the nearby permissions form a binding precedent for the appeal scheme has not been demonstrated.
17. The Framework requires that the planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural environment, including minimising impacts on biodiversity. In this case the scheme has failed to demonstrate whether the development would have an impact upon biodiversity and that any such impacts have been minimised. Consequently, this would be contrary to the requirements of CS Policy CS17, which seeks amongst other things, to conserve and enhance biodiversity, including protecting and enhancing habitats of protected species.

Other Matters

18. To the north of Holly Tree Cottage is Bridgemans. This timber framed thatched roof house is a listed building and has a distinct vernacular appearance. As required by the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 I have paid special regard to the desirability of preserving a listed building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.
19. At the time of my site inspection works were occurring to an outbuilding that was close to the boundary of Bridgemans with the appeal property. The size and positioning of this outbuilding is such that it creates a defined definition to the setting of Bridgemans. This, along with the listed house being positioned on the northern side of its plot, and that the rear extensions would be attached to an existing dwelling close to its southern side, would result in the extensions having a neutral impact upon the setting of Bridgemans.
20. The appellant has raised concerns regarding the Council's handling of the application and appeal. Such concerns fall to be pursued by other means separate from the appeal process and are not for me to consider.

Conclusion

21. The proposal would unacceptably harm the character and appearance of the host building and the surrounding area, and there has been no assessment of the implications of the development upon protected species. The proposal would conflict with the development plan taken as a whole, and there are no

material considerations that indicate the decision should be made other than in accordance with the development plan. Thus, for the reasons given above and having considered all other matters raised, the appeal is dismissed.

J J Evans

INSPECTOR