



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 27 June 2022

by Mr S Rennie BSc (Hons), BA (Hons), MA, MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 17 August 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/D3125/D/21/3283716

75 Grove Road, Bladon, WOODSTOCK, OX20 1RJ

- 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 Jon Calvert against the decision of West Oxfordshire District Council.
 - The application Ref 21/01475/HHD, dated 22 April 2021, was refused by notice dated 8 July 2021.
 - The development proposed is for a one and a half storey front extension, external and internal amendments and a single storey replacement garage.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are the effect of the development on the character and appearance of the area, together with the significance of Heritage Assets (HAs) including the setting of the Bladon Conservation Area (CA).

Reasons

3. The area is characterised by predominantly detached dwellings, often of traditional design and form, set well back from the plot frontage with the road. There are in some cases, including the appeal site, a garage positioned forward of the dwelling towards the front boundary.
4. The proposal would demolish the existing garage. This would be replaced by a larger garage for storage for up to four vehicles positioned much closer to the front boundary than the existing garage. However, the replacement garage would have a very low profile with a sedum roof. Set behind the stone boundary wall this would have very little visual impact from outside of the site.
5. There is also the proposed extension to the existing dwelling. It would be a large extension, but it would not overdevelop the plot or be over-scaled in relation to the existing house. However, this extension would be positioned to the elevation facing the street of the existing dwelling, with the result being that it would be visually the most prominent aspect of the enlarged dwelling. Whilst it would still be set back from the front boundary, it would be particularly prominent within the street scene due to its forward location. The prevailing character of the area is for dwellings to be well set back from the plot frontage. However, the proposed large extension in this forward location within the plot would be an incongruous feature and unduly prominent in this street setting.

6. I recognise that the dwelling extension would be set back slightly further than the existing garage, but it would be bulkier, wider and more visually prominent than this garage. Furthermore, it is not out of character for a forward positioned garage in this street, but this is clearly not an ancillary outbuilding being that it is a large house extension.
7. In terms of the design, the use of zinc for the roof is a modern element but would positively contrast with the existing dwelling. The appellant has also provided evidence of similar materials used elsewhere in the wider locality. The balance of the roof form is also not a harmful aspect of the design in my view.
8. The two dormers on what would be the street facing elevation are also of a contemporary nature. However, their design and size would, in my view, jar with the existing dormers on the dwelling, which are of a more traditional size and form. A modern style of dormer could be appropriate, but it should better reflect the prevailing style and proportions including those on the existing dwelling, especially as they would be particularly prominent. The dormers as proposed would further increase the incongruous visual impact of the proposed extension within the street scene.
9. It could be that the appellant could build an alternative extension under permitted development, but it is not clear whether this is a realistic proposition which would be implemented if this appeal were dismissed. I have given this matter limited weight.
10. The site is also near to the Bladon CA, which is further to the southwest of the site covering the historic village core. This CA derives its significance from the historic buildings and layout of the village. There are also the adjacent grounds of Blenheim Palace, which is a World Heritage Site, and other listed buildings within the area.
11. Section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 is relevant to this appeal as it requires special regard as to whether to grant planning permission for development which affects a listed building or its setting. Also, Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act requires special attention to be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of Conservation Areas in the exercise of planning functions.
12. The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) also advises that heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource and should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance. Paragraph 199 of 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.
13. Due to the close proximity of the site to the CA boundary I would consider that it is within the setting of this HA. The site and the proposed extension would also be seen as part of the view into Bladon and its CA when viewed along Grove Road. The harm to the character and appearance of the area as a result of the incongruous and overly prominent proposed extension would also detract from the character and significance of the CA and the views into it. The setting of the CA would neither be preserved nor enhanced.

14. However, given the position of the proposed extension to the front of the existing dwelling and its scale, it would not have any material impact to the setting of Blenheim Palace or its boundary walls, parks and formal gardens. It would preserve this World Heritage Site and these listed buildings and parklands. Also, due to the significant separation distance the proposal would not impact on the setting of Eagle Lodge, which is also a Grade II listed building. The proposal would not be contrary to policies EH14 and EW9 for these reasons.
15. However, as explained above, the proposed extension would be harmful to the setting of the Conservation Area. Nevertheless, the harm would be less than substantial and in accordance with paragraph 202 of the Framework that harm should be weighed against any public benefits of the proposal. There are no significant public benefits arising from the proposal (being that it is for extensions to a private dwelling), to offset the identified harm, to which I must attach considerable importance and weight.
16. Overall, whilst there would be no adverse impact to the World Heritage Site or listed buildings, the proposal would have a design and siting which would be harmful to the character of the streetscene and also detract from the setting of the CA. The proposal is therefore contrary to policies OS2, OS4, H6, EH9, EH10 and EH13 of the adopted Local Plan 2031. These policies require development to respect the village character and local distinctiveness; respect the historic and architectural character; and preserve and/or enhance the special architectural and historic interest, character and/or appearance of the District's Conservation Areas and their settings; amongst other things.

Other Matters

17. The site is within a designated Green Belt. The Council have not stated that the proposed development is inappropriate within the Green Belt. Although a large extension, from the evidence before me I would conclude that this proposed development could be considered a form of extension of a building which does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building. As set out in the Framework this is a form of development not inappropriate in the Green Belt.

Conclusion

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

Mr S Rennie

INSPECTOR