
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 25 August 2022

by David Reed BSc DipTP DMS MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 06 October 2022.

Appeal Ref: APP/V3120/D/22/3295857

Acorn Cottage, The Green, Longcot, Faringdon SN7 7SY

- 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 Bendall against the decision of Vale of White Horse District Council.
 - The application Ref P21/V3267/HH, dated 11 November 2021, was refused by notice dated 2 February 2022.
 - The development proposed is a two-storey side extension.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are:
 - the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the dwelling and the area generally;
 - whether the proposal would provide acceptable access and parking arrangements;
 - the potential effect of the proposal on the nearby Ash tree;
 - whether the proposal would provide acceptable living conditions for the occupiers in relation to outdoor amenity space; and
 - whether the proposed air source heat pump would cause unacceptable noise disturbance.

Reasons

Character and appearance

3. The proposal is for a two-storey extension to the side of Acorn Cottage, a one-bedroom semi-detached property in a group of three forming an 'island' site within the village green. The attached dwelling, Oak Cottage, was created after planning permission was granted in 2010 for the subdivision of a larger property that previously comprised both. The third dwelling, Priory Cottage, adjoins Oak Cottage with its parking and turning area extending alongside the application site.
4. The side extension would be large, nearly doubling the size of Acorn Cottage, with its front and rear walls flush with the existing cottage and the current

simple pitched roof form maintained by adopting the same eaves and ridge lines. Whilst the resulting extension would not be subservient in scale or design to the existing cottage, given the use of matching materials, similar fenestration on the front elevation and 'island' location within the village green it would simply appear together with Oak Cottage as a longer terrace building. However, the south facing end elevation would include large full height folding doors at ground level and tall 'Juliet' windows lighting the first-floor bedroom. These openings would be easily seen from the road and the latter from the green and would appear out of character with the existing small scale cottage style windows of both Acorn and Oak Cottages.

5. This would significantly detract from the character and appearance of the dwelling and the area generally in conflict with Policy CP37 of the Vale of White Horse Local Plan Part 1 2016 (the VWHL P1). This requires proposals for new development to conserve and reinforce local identity.
6. Any loss of frontage hedge for a second parking space or pressure which could lead to adverse consequences for the current size, growth or longevity of the prominent Ash tree adjacent to the southern boundary of the property would comprise further significant harm to the character and appearance of the area contrary to Policy CP37.

Access and parking

7. The proposal involves the loss of the existing lean-to garage which the appellant states is not used for parking. A single parking space has been created next to this which would remain¹. Whilst the original application plans showed the provision of a second space involving the loss of some frontage hedge and garden, a subsequent plan reverts to one space as the second 'is not now requested'. However, the highway authority state that a two-bedroom property in this village with few services and facilities should be provided with two spaces to avoid or minimise any on-street parking; also that the necessary visibility splays should be provided.
8. The appellant argues two spaces are not required but this may only be the case for the current occupiers who it is understood have one vehicle. Whilst there are no parking restrictions on street and the road outside is relatively wide, there are no footways, it coincides with a narrowing of the carriageway beyond and an oblique junction with Mallins Lane. In these particular circumstances sufficient off-street parking should be provided. In addition, whilst road users including pedestrians may take extra care justifying some relaxation of normal visibility requirements, the plans submitted to date are insufficiently detailed to determine whether this is the case.
9. For these reasons the proposal does not include acceptable access and parking arrangements and conflicts with VWHL P1 Policies CP35 and CP37 which require adequate parking on new developments, a sufficient level of well-integrated car parking and safe and convenient ease of movement.

Ash tree

10. The medium sized Ash tree adjacent to the southern boundary of the property occupies an important focal point at the end of the southern section of village

¹ Said by the highway authority to be unauthorised

green². Whilst the extension would be some distance from the tree and the existing parking space has already been constructed, a second parking space would encroach closer to it and the proposed air source heat pump would be positioned under the canopy involving some ground works. In addition, the only external amenity space for the two-bedroom property would be under the tree, or for much of the day in its shadow, leading to pressure for tree surgery to reduce its impact.

11. The appellant notes that Ash trees grow quickly, has contemplated the pruning of overhanging branches to improve the useability of the amenity space (albeit this is not currently planned) and considers it may be a weak specimen. In the circumstances a detailed arboricultural report is necessary to assess the future of and potential harm to the tree should the scheme go ahead. In the absence of a satisfactory report the size, growth or longevity of the visually important tree may be adversely affected. This would conflict with VWHLP1 Policy CP44 which seeks to protect key features such as trees from harmful development.

Outdoor amenity space

12. The appellant states that with one car parking space the amount of external amenity space for the property is 51 sq m, just meeting the Council's design guide recommendation for 50 sq m for a two-bedroom home. However, much of this would be under or adversely affected by the close proximity of the Ash tree, significantly reducing its useability. Whilst the adjacent village green provides public open space, this is no substitute for adequate private space suitable for sitting out, gardening, and other purposes. The proposal would therefore not provide acceptable living conditions for the occupiers in relation to outdoor amenity space in conflict with VWHLP1 Policy CP37 which requires new development to meet recreational needs and to function well.

Heat pump

13. The proposal includes the installation of an air source heat pump at the south-western corner of the property adjacent to the grounds of Priory Cottage and the village green. The neighbour and Council are concerned this may give rise to unacceptable noise disturbance. The appellant states that the pump will make no more noise than a domestic refrigerator but immediately adjacent to neighbouring property this could still be intrusive. Neither party has submitted detailed evidence. It is not clear if the appellant would potentially accept an alternative location, in which case the siting and specification of the heat pump could be controlled by condition. However, in the light of the overall conclusion there is no need to pursue this matter further.

Conclusion

14. The proposal would provide a large second bedroom and greatly increased ground floor living accommodation for the current occupiers, improved energy efficiency, wheelchair accessibility, convenience and security. The dwelling would be a 'lifetime' home, built using low carbon materials, in a built-up village location and would generate economic benefits for the local area. The small size of the existing dwelling is appreciated, but this is the inevitable result of the decision to subdivide the predecessor property and does not in

² Notwithstanding the lack of a tree preservation order or conservation area designation

itself justify an extension. The appellant draws attention to other larger scale developments nearby, but none are directly comparable to the appeal scheme.

15. These material considerations, even taken in combination, are insufficient to outweigh the planning objections set out above and the associated conflict with the development plan. The appeal should therefore be dismissed.

David Reed

INSPECTOR