



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 15 September 2022

by J D Westbrook BSc(Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 17th October 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/C3105/D/22/3302659

2 Dewars Farm Cottages, Ardley Road, Middleton Stoney, BICESTER, OX25 4AE

- 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 Owain Morton against the decision of Cherwell District Council.
 - The application Ref 22/00642/F, dated 2 March 2022, was refused by notice dated 27 April 2022.
 - The development proposed is the construction of a single- and 1.5-storey front extension.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues in this case are the effects of the proposed extension on:
 - The character and appearance of the area around Ardley Road to the north of Middleton Stoney, and
 - The living conditions of the occupiers of No 1 Dewars Farm Cottages by way of light and outlook.

Reasons

3. Nos 1 and 2 Dewars Farm Cottages are a pair of semi-detached houses situated in open countryside on the eastern side of Ardley Road, some 400 metres north of the village of Middleton Stoney. They are stone-built houses, set around 6 metres back from the front boundary. Each has a pitched roof with gable end, and each includes a gable front elevation of similar appearance and dimensions. No 2 also has a projecting front porch with a north-facing front door, a small first-floor front dormer, and a large two-storey rear extension. No 1 has only a small front porch and no two-storey rear extension. The plots are relatively shallow, but have wide side gardens.
4. Policy ESD 15 of the Cherwell Local Plan (LP) indicates that new development will be expected to complement and enhance the character of its context through sensitive siting, layout and high quality design. Policy C28 of the Cherwell District Plan (DP) indicates that control will be exercised over all new development, including extensions, to ensure that the standards of layout,

design and external appearance, including the choice of external-finish materials, are sympathetic to the character of the context of that development. Policy C30 of the DP indicates that design control will be exercised to ensure that any proposal to extend an existing dwelling is compatible with the scale of the existing dwelling, its curtilage and the character of the street scene. Development should also provide acceptable standards of amenity and privacy.

5. Chapter 5 of the Home Extensions & Alterations Design Guide (DG) advises that extensions to the front of houses can disrupt the pattern of the buildings in a street and obscure the original elevation, so they are generally discouraged. Small and suitably designed porches at the front may be acceptable while, as a general rule, flat roofed extensions are discouraged unless they are well designed and are appropriate in the context of the existing building and the wider area.
6. The Council contends that the proposed extension, by virtue of its size, design and positioning would result in an overly prominent feature that detracts from the character and appearance of the existing dwelling, the pair of dwellings of which it forms a part, and the wider street scene. It would fail to complement and enhance the character and appearance of its context and would result in significant harm to the visual amenities of the area. Further, the 1.5-storey extension, by virtue of its size and positioning, would result in significant harm to the living amenities of the occupiers of the adjoining No 1 Dewars Farm Cottages through an overbearing appearance, loss of daylight and outlook.
7. The appellant contends that the appeal property is in a relatively isolated position with strong front boundary planting and a lack of any pedestrian pavement, and is not, therefore, readily visible in the street scene. Moreover, the proposed extension has, been designed in a sympathetic, proportionate and vernacular manner to the features of the existing property and its neighbour. Nos 1 and 2 Dewars Farm Cottages are not a matching pair in design appearance terms and may be considered an unbalanced and asymmetrical pair of properties. Finally, the appellant contends that the window in the ground-floor front elevation of the neighbouring property serves only as a secondary window to a kitchen, and that the proposed extension at No 2 would not, therefore, have any significant impact on the light received by that room.

Character and appearance

8. The proposed 1.5-storey front extension would project some 5.4 metres beyond the existing main front elevation of the appeal property. This would result in it extending virtually to the front boundary of the property. The front boundary is currently marked by both a 2 metre high fence and a tall mature hedge fronting the road. The road has no pavement at this point and the hedge abuts the roadway itself. In addition to the 1.5-storey element, there would be a single-storey enlarged hall and utility room area, with a crown roof.
9. The appellant contends that the strong front boundary planting and lack of any pavement, would mean that the extension would not be readily visible in the streetscene. However, the front elevation of the extension would be in very close proximity to the boundary hedge, and would have windows in the front elevation. As a result, I have significant concerns that the extension could adversely impact the health of the hedge and, in addition, I consider that there would, in any case, be a strong possibility that the boundary fence and hedge would, in the future, be significantly reduced in height or removed to allow light

into the downstairs habitable room and the first-floor bedroom/ensuite proposed. This would bring the extension into very close proximity to the edge of the carriageway and make it highly prominent in the street scene. On this basis, it would become an uncharacteristic and dominant feature, harmful to the context of its surroundings and the appearance of this otherwise open area of countryside.

10. The main front elevations of Nos 1 and 2 follow a largely consistent building line and the properties appear from the front as a combined unit, each with a similar scale and design. The proposed front extension would obscure the current front elevation and would appear as out of scale and character with the rest of the host property and the pair of houses of which it is a part. In addition, the crown roof of the single-storey part of the extension, with its combined hipped and flat-roofed elements, would not match the roof profiles of the rest of the house and would appear as an unsympathetic, somewhat confused, feature.
11. In conclusion on this issue, I find that the design and external appearance of the proposed front single- and 1.5-storey extension would not be sympathetic to the context or appearance of the pair of dwellings, and would not be compatible with the scale of the existing dwelling and the character of the street scene. On this basis, it would be harmful to the character and appearance of the area along Ardley Road and the wider area of open countryside to the north of Middleton Stoney. It would conflict with Policy ESD15 of the LP, Policies C28 and C30 of the DP, and with guidance on front extensions in the DG.

Living conditions

12. The proposed extension would project some 5.4 metres beyond the existing front elevation of the house at a point a little over 0.5 metres from the common boundary with No 1. There is a kitchen window in the front elevation of No 1, but any view of the proposed 1.5-storey extension would be largely obscured by the porch at No 1, which leads off the kitchen. In addition, the proposed extension would be to the north of No 1, and I do not consider that it would have any significant harmful impact on the light received by the front kitchen window at No 1.
13. The proposed extension would be a dominant and somewhat oppressive feature when viewed from the front garden of No 1, but I do not consider that, on its own, this limited harm would be sufficient to dismiss this appeal. In conclusion, therefore, on this issue, I find that the proposed extension would not be significantly harmful to the living conditions of the occupiers of No 1 and would not conflict with the Policies in the LP and DP referred to above.

Conclusion

14. The proposed extension would have only very limited harm to the living conditions of the occupiers of No 1, but it would be significantly harmful to the character and appearance of the area along Ardley Road and the surrounding countryside. In view of the combined harm, I dismiss the appeal.

J D Westbrook

INSPECTOR