



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 24 October 2022

by Rebecca Thomas MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 05 January 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/W0340/D/22/3298955

The Clock House, Webbs Lane, Beenham, Reading RG7 5LH

- 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 Andrew Mayo against the decision of West Berkshire Council.
 - The application Ref 21/02842/HOUSE, dated 20 October 2021, was refused by notice dated 22 February 2022.
 - The development proposed is First floor extension, loft conversion and internal modifications.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issues are the effect of the proposed development on;
 - i) the character and appearance of the host dwelling and the landscape and scenic beauty of the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), and
 - ii) the living conditions of neighbouring occupiers in terms of outlook and privacy.

Reasons

Character and appearance

3. The appeal site is a red brick property set in a converted coach house with stabling on both sides around it, creating a typical courtyard arrangement. The appeal site appears to be the primary coach house element, being two storeys and the central element of the former block. The entire building has been converted for residential use, providing three dwellings. I was able to see at my site visit that a number of alterations and additions have been made to the building as a whole, including a single storey rear extension to the appeal site.
4. The appeal site is two storey and features a clock tower and also includes rooflights to the roof slope. The windows to the rear elevation are uniform casement windows, which stretch along the rear of the property. The single storey rear extension includes glazed doors in a similar style to the casement windows.

5. The proposed development would introduce a first floor gabled addition to the existing single storey flat-roofed rear extension. This would include glazing to the first floor, providing a 'Juliet' style balcony and further glazing to the gable. The development would be constructed of brickwork and clay tiles to match the existing. The eaves would match the level of the existing, with the ridge reaching just beneath the main ridge height of the original building.
6. Whilst I acknowledge that the proposed extension would make use of matching materials and would be set just below the ridge of the original building, the development represents a significant and bulky addition to the house and overall building, with additions which depart from the original appearance and character of the original. The introduction of the gable to the relatively uniform rear elevation, its size and interruption into the roofslope, combined with the proposed glazing, would significantly diminish the original character of the building, being at odds with the original and unbalancing the existing character and appearance of the coach house and stable buildings as a whole.
7. At my site visit I was able to see that the building can be seen from Webbs Lane. Whilst I accept that the development may be glimpsed only, the addition of the bulky gable end would dramatically alter the coach house and its appearance, reducing the overall understanding of the building's original form and function. The proximity and bulk of the gable end to the clock tower would further diminish the original character, form and appearance of the host building.
8. Whilst the appellant considers that there have been previously approved extensions at the wider site which may be of little design merit, these additions tend to remain secondary to the original building, and even so the development as proposed would result in harm to the character and appearance of the dwelling and its setting within this small group of buildings and within the AONB. I consider that the harm to the AONB would be limited, nonetheless find that the proposal would fail to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the building and its character within the AONB.
9. The development would conflict with policies CS14 and CS19 of the Core Strategy¹, which expect that (amongst other things) new development represents high quality and sustainable design, being of scale, appearance and design in the context of the existing settlement form, pattern and character. There would also be conflict with policy C6 of the Council's DPD² which also expects that the scale of any enlargement to existing dwellings in the countryside be subservient to the original dwelling and designed to be in character with the existing dwelling.
10. The appellant refers to a number of other paragraphs within the Framework, stating that these relate to the appeal proposal. For the reasons set out above, I find that the appeal proposals conflict with the District Plan and Sections 12 and 16 of the Framework and I do not consider that the paragraphs referred to by the appellant support the proposal.

Living conditions

¹ West Berkshire Core Strategy 2006-2026 (July 2012)

² West Berkshire Housing Site Allocations DPD 2006-2026 (May 2017)

11. The proposed development would introduce a wide Juliet style balcony to the rear elevation, and a further casement window to the first floor side elevation, facing the adjoining property, at the Old Coach House.
12. Given the nature of the Juliet balcony and its location within the appeal site, there would not be significant additional overlooking to neighbouring properties beyond that already experienced however I have taken note of the proximity of the appeal site to its neighbours as well as the garden sizes and sitting out areas.
13. The addition of the side-facing window would increase the overlooking to the neighbour at the Coach house, facing directly into that neighbour's garden and sitting out area immediately adjacent to their house. Nonetheless, I have also taken into account the larger garden space afforded to this neighbouring property, in particular the sitting out areas away from the appeal site. Therefore, the degree of overlooking that would result would not be so unacceptable as to justify refusing the appeal.
14. It is thus concluded that the proposed development would not harm the living conditions of the occupiers of the neighbouring properties with respect to overlooking and loss of privacy. The scheme would comply with the overall amenity and design aims of policies CS of the DPD and the Council's SPG3 which seek to ensure consideration of the effects of development on the privacy of neighbouring properties.

Other Matters

15. The appellant refers to additional extensions at neighbouring properties (both complete and underway). Whilst I do not have the detail for each development, I was able to see that one of the extensions was single storey. Even so, the circumstances in each proposal are likely to be different, given differing locations and proposals affecting the building in different ways. I also note that there is concern over other decisions and the consistency of decision making between the Council's officers.
16. Notwithstanding the above, the fact that other extensions may have been permitted is not a reason, on its own, to allow unacceptable development. I have considered this appeal proposal on its own merits and concluded that it would cause harm for the reasons set out above.

Conclusion

17. For the reasons given above, having considered the development plan as a whole and all other relevant material consideration, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Rebecca Thomas

INSPECTOR

³ West Berkshire Supplementary Planning Guidance; House Extensions (July 2004)