



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 23 May 2023

by Jonathan Edwards BSc(Hons) DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 5th June 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/R3325/D/23/3317845

Oakdene, Long Furlong Lane, East Coker, Yeovil, Somerset BA22 9LQ

- 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 Daniel Hedditch against the decision of South Somerset District Council.
 - The application Ref 22/02682/HOU, dated 16 September 2022, was refused by notice dated 21 December 2022.
 - The development proposed is first floor extension to existing bungalow
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are the effect of the development on (i) the character and appearance of Oakdene and its surroundings, and (ii) the oak tree at the appeal property.

Reasons

Character and appearance

3. Oakdene is a bungalow with a main roof hipped on each side and with the eaves just above doors and ground floor windows. There are 2 front projections with a ridgeline below the ridge of the main roof. The bungalow is set above and back from the road with a large oak tree on the front boundary. However, it is seen to either side of the tree trunk from the road and from a public footpath in the opposite field. The nearby properties on Long Furlong Lane differ in appearance and some have dormer windows in front roof slopes. Even so, they tend to be low level and so similar to Oakdene in terms of height.
4. The extension would be seen from the road and from part of the footpath near to the highway. Field boundary vegetation and the leaves of the oak would screen the extension from the length of the footpath away from the road. However, I would envisage it would be more visible from a distance during times of leaf fall. As such, the proposal would have an obvious effect on public views of Oakdene and on the immediate street scene.
5. The development would protrude above the ridge of the main roof. Also, its eaves would lie just below the existing ridgeline and well above the eaves on the existing property. Consequently, the extension would cause the dwelling to have a lop sided appearance, at odds with the more consistent form of the bungalow as it stands. Furthermore, the current dwelling has a significant

horizontal emphasis with low eaves and ridge lines. The extension would create a strong vertical emphasis on one side of the dwelling and so it would lead to a marked imbalance to the property when seen from the road. Timber cladding on large parts of the extension's external walls would emphasise this incongruity as such materials are not used elsewhere on Oakdene.

6. From the adjoining properties to the side and to the rear, the stark disparity in terms of height and external materials between the extension and the original dwelling would also be apparent. These views would be localised and from private property but the lack of harmony on the rear elevation would reinforce the unsympathetic aspects of the addition.
7. Furthermore, the unusual building form as a result of the proposal would make Oakdene stand out in the context of the other properties on Long Furlong Lane. There are taller houses to the rear but the intervening dwellings and vegetation ensure these do not significantly influence the street scene. As such, the development would be incompatible in terms of its appearance to the locality.
8. I am referred to an extension at The Beeches that the appellant advises has influenced the design of the proposal. This property is on Long Furlong Lane but it is not seen in the same context as Oakdene. Also, its extension does not protrude above the main roof and its eaves are lower and closer to those on the original bungalow compared to the appeal development. It is constructed of materials that match the main house. As such, The Beeches' addition is not so similar to the appeal scheme so as to overcome the identified incongruity.
9. Properties at Barley Mead include timber cladding but such materials are not common in the locality. Moreover, these properties are seen in their own cul de sac context and are not viewed with Oakdene. As such, the use of timber cladding as proposed would be at odds with the general character of the locality.
10. The properties on Long Furlong Lane include 2 storey dwellings as well as residences that are nearer to the road and so more prominent than Oakdene. Also, reference is made to extensions to 7 Meadow View, to Park Lodge and to a pavilion at the nearby recreation ground to justify the proposal's design. However, these other properties and extensions do not address nor justify the particular harm caused by virtue of the unsympathetic design of the proposal.
11. For these reasons, I conclude the development would have a harmful effect on the character and appearance of Oakdene and its surroundings. In these respects, it would not accord with policy EQ2 of the South Somerset Local Plan 2015 (the LP) and policy ECCN2 of the East Coker Neighbourhood Plan 2018 (the NP). Amongst other things, these policies seek high quality design that reinforces local distinctiveness, respects the local character and provides continuity with the existing built form.

Oak tree

12. The oak is in a prominent position on the edge of the village and seen from Long Furlong Lane and the public footpath. It is protected by a tree preservation order and it makes a significant contribution to the visual qualities of the area.
13. The oak is away from the front of the bungalow and so its canopy would not obstruct the extension. However, the Council is concerned that the adjacent

lawn would need to be subject to protection measures during construction to prevent damage to the tree and its root system. No details of any protection measures have been provided.

14. However, as well as the lawn there is a hard surface drive and path between the front of the house and the oak. The extension would be constructed on top of the existing building with no increase in footprint. Therefore, fencing and other protective measures could be installed on the edge of the lawn while maintaining access for construction to the front and side of the property. It would be reasonable to address this matter through the imposition of a planning condition.
15. Therefore, I conclude the development would not cause harm to the well-being of the oak tree. In these respects, it would accord with LP policies EQ2 and EQ5 as well as NP policies ECCN2 and ECCN5. These look to ensure development conserves the landscape character as well as green infrastructure and trees.

Other Considerations and Planning Balance

16. The proposal would help meet the appellant's accommodation needs. However, there is no evidence that indicates Oakdene provides a substandard living environment in general terms. As such, the benefits in these regards relate to the appellant's personal circumstances rather than in the public interest.
17. Permitted development rights (PDRs) allow the erection of an extra storey onto the bungalow, subject to various clauses. In light of the appellant's accommodation requirements, I am sure consideration will be given to exercising such rights in the event of the appeal being dismissed. As such, there is more than a theoretical possibility that an extra storey may be added to Oakdene under PDRs.
18. However, the terms of the PDRs would ensure that matching external materials are used and that prior approval is granted as to the external appearance of the dwellinghouse. Therefore, the fallback provided by development allowed under PDRs would not be as harmful to the character and appearance of the bungalow and its surroundings compared to the appeal proposal. As such, I attribute limited weight to the fallback position in my overall assessment.
19. The proposal would not harm the well being of the oak tree. However, the detriment identified in respect of the first main issue means the extension would conflict with the development plan policies when considered as a whole. The benefits of the scheme and other considerations are of insufficient weight to justify a decision other than in accordance with the development plan.

Conclusion

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

Jonathan Edwards

INSPECTOR