



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 3 July 2023

by R Lawrence MRTPI, BSc (hons), PGDip (TP)

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 1 September 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/R0335/D/23/3318381

2 Church Road, Little Sandhurst, Bracknell Forest, Sandhurst GU47 8HZ

- 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 Walder against the decision of Bracknell Forest Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 22/00350/FUL, dated 28 April 2022, was refused by notice dated 22 December 2022.
 - The development proposed is Demolition of existing open-plan garage. Construction of new two storey front, side and rear elevation. New dormer to second floor to rear elevation. New rooflight over existing kitchen.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. It has been brought to my attention that the parking plan titled 'Amended Site Plan' (21A) was omitted from the plan numbers informative on the decision notice in error. Confirmation has been provided that it was considered as part of the planning application submission. I have therefore had regard to this plan in my assessment of the appeal scheme.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the development on the character and appearance of the host property, the surrounding area and the effect on off-site trees.

Reasons

4. The appeal site comprises one of a pair of semi-detached properties together with an attached car port and detached garage. The site is a corner plot located at the junction with the High Street and Wokingham Road and has a verdant appearance due to a number of trees close to the site boundaries. The area is residential in character and comprises a varied mix of housing types.
5. There are a number of trees in close proximity to the appeal site which are the subject of a Tree Preservation Order (TPO). Those relevant to the reason for refusal are two Birch trees located within a neighbouring garden close to the site boundary, along with an Oak tree which is also off site and adjacent to the main road. These trees are each of a significant size, and each make a positive contribution to the visual amenity of the area including providing visual screening between the residential housing and the main road, as recognised by their inclusion in the area TPO. The proposed extension would be located close

to the canopies of the off-site Birch trees, whilst the proposed parking area would fall under the canopy of the off-site Oak tree.

6. The proximity of the proposed extension to the trees would leave a very modest separation distance with the Root Protection Areas of the Birch Trees. Whilst there is disagreement over the exact separation, the best-case scenario of 1.5m presented by the appellant, would still be very modest. There is then very limited evidence in terms of how the requirements of the construction works and future maintenance could be accommodated without harm to the trees.
7. Upon construction, the proximity of the extension to the proposed Birch trees would result in likely pressure to excessively prune or lop the trees, as a result of conflict between branches and the extended property. I note the appellant considers that the Birch trees have reached maturity, and further growth is therefore unlikely, however, this is not substantiated by the submitted evidence. As such, I have had regard to the possibility of further growth of the trees. I accept that the position of windows within the extension would avoid likely pressures to fell/prune due to a loss of light, however, this wouldn't override pressures arising due to the potential for property damage. Whilst the protected status of the trees would afford some protection, it can be difficult for a Council to resist applications to prune or fell in circumstances where safety is at issue, or where damage is being sustained. As such, this does not address the issue.
8. The proposed car parking area would be located within the Root Protection Area of the protected Oak tree. The appellant has proposed a grasscrete no-dig surface type, however, the suitability for protecting the rooting environment of the Oak tree has not been demonstrated. Due to the differences in levels around the proposed parking space, there is a likely need for alterations to land levels, leading to a likely adverse impact on the tree roots of the Oak Tree.
9. Having regard to the above factors, I am not satisfied that the proposed development would result in a sustainable relationship with retained trees, such to ensure their long-term health. The proximity of the proposed development to the trees would be likely to result in harm to the Birch and Oak trees by way of root damage and pressure for future pruning/lopping.
10. In terms of the effect of the extension upon the host property, the extension would result in large increases to the footprint and to the height, depth and width of the side projection. I accept that whilst the extension would replace an existing large car port, the form of the extension would appear more substantial than the car port which is open and allows views through. The extension would remain subordinate in height to the host dwelling and would be set back from the front elevation. As such, notwithstanding the large footprint and increase in width, the set-back and set down in height would ensure that the extension remains subordinate in scale. The design of the extension, including in respect of the proposed roof pitch and window detailing, would closely reflect the appearance of the host dwelling which would ensure it integrates well visually.
11. The balance of the semi-detached pair of properties would be altered, as the width and form of the side projection would be notably different to the side projection at No 4 - the adjoining semi-detached property. However, it is notable that an imbalance between the two semi-detached properties already

exists. I find that the difference between the side projections would not be materially harmful, as there would remain a strong symmetry between the front elevations of the original semi-detached properties. The appeal site is in a prominent location, close to a road junction and the extension would be very visible. Nonetheless, as I have found that the proposed extension would complement the character of the existing property, in turn I find that the proposed extension would sit comfortably within the wider street scene. Notwithstanding my comments on the acceptability of the extension itself in design terms, this would not override the harm to the character of the area resulting from adverse effects upon off-site trees.

12. The proposal would result in likely harm to off-site trees and in turn would adversely impact upon the character and appearance of the area. Therefore, the proposal would conflict with Policies EN1 and EN20 of the Bracknell Forest Borough Local Plan 2002 which seek to protect existing tree cover and provide a high-quality design, as well as Policy CS7 of the Core Strategy Development Plan Document 2008 which seeks to ensure good design which enhances the landscape as well as paragraph 131 of the framework which seeks to ensure existing trees are retained wherever possible.
13. Whilst not included in the Council's reason for refusal, I have been provided with a copy of the Design Supplementary Planning Document, March 2017. This contains a variety of guidance on achieving good quality design, in support of the relevant development plan policies. My attention has not been drawn to any particular guidance of relevance to the appeal proposal and the main issue. As such, I only attach limited weight to this document.
14. The Council's reason for refusal makes reference to the Character Area Assessments SPD 2010. The map accompanying this SPD indicates that the appeal site falls outside of the character areas addressed within the SPD. As such, this does not appear to be relevant to the main issue and it has not been determinative to the appeal.

Conclusion

15. The appeal scheme would conflict with the Development Plan. Therefore, for the reasons set out above, and having had regard to all other matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

R. Lawrence

INSPECTOR