



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 9 October 2023

by G Roberts BA (Hons) MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 17.10.2023

Appeal Ref: APP/C1760/D/23/3327352

The Old Laundry, Awbridge Hill, Awbridge, Hampshire, SO51 0HF

- 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 Thomas Wheeler against the decision of Test Valley Borough Council.
 - The application Ref. 23/01257/FULLS, dated 15 May 2023, was refused by notice dated 11 July 2023.
 - The development proposed is demolish porch and boiler room, erect first floor and two storey rear extension, create open porch and alterations to windows and doors.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted to demolish porch and boiler room, erect first floor and two storey rear extension, create open porch and alterations to windows and doors at The Old Laundry, Awbridge Hill, Awbridge, Hampshire, SO51 0HF in accordance with the terms of the application Ref. 23/01257/FULLS dated 15 May 2023, and the plans submitted with it and subject to the conditions listed below.
 - 1) The development hereby permitted shall begin before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.
 - 2) The materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of the development hereby permitted shall, where stated, match those on the existing building and otherwise be in accordance with those shown on the application form.
 - 3) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans (all received 16/05/23): 1431/13; 1431/14; 1431/15; 1431/16; 1431/17; 1431/18; 1431/19.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the appeal proposal on the character and appearance of the host property and surrounding area.

Reasons

3. The appeal site is located to the south of Stanbridge Lane and comprises a single storey semi-detached property with pitched roof. The rear garden to the property faces onto Stanbridge Lane, from where it is screened by a high boundary hedge. Access to the property is obtained via a shared right of way from Awbridge Hill which runs to the west of the other half of the semi,

Sanctuary Cottage. The latter has been extended and comprises a large part two part single storey property. The shared access leads to a parking area for the host property and its rear garden, which is extensive and includes an outbuilding on the boundary with the property to the east known as The Barn.

4. The surrounding area is typical of that commonly found in small rural villages, with a mixture of old and new properties, including modern infill, farmhouses and agricultural buildings. There is no uniform character to these properties, which vary in terms of their scale, form, layout, orientation, roof forms, age and pallet of materials. Whilst the host property is visible, in passing, from Stanbridge Lane, those views are limited by the narrowness of the lane and high boundary hedging. There is also a public right of way (Test Way) to the west and south west of the appeal site where views of the host are less prominent. As I observed on site, the recent development at Blue Haze is far more prominent from the public right of way.
5. The appeal proposal involves the construction of a first floor and two storey rear extension, an open porch and alterations to the windows and doors.
6. The Council's objection refers to policies COM 11 (criterion (b) and (c)) and E1 of the Test Valley Borough Revised Local Plan DPD 2011 – 2029 (January 2016) (TVLP). Combined these policies seek, amongst other requirements, to support development where: it is of a high quality design and local distinctiveness; it integrates, respects and complements the character of the area in terms of layout, appearance, scale, materials and building style; it makes efficient use of land whilst respecting character; the size of any new extension is not visually intrusive in the landscape; and the design of any extension is in keeping with the existing dwelling. These policies are broadly consistent with those set out in paragraphs 130 and 134 of the Framework.
7. Within the above context, the proposed first floor and two storey rear extension would not, in my judgement, appear out of scale or harmful to the streetscene. I accept that there would be a material change to the scale and appearance of the host property when viewed from the lane. However, given that Sanctuary Cottage has similar two storey front and rear gabled additions, the appeal proposal would not appear out of character. On the contrary, the proposal would respect, complement and integrate well with the design of its neighbour. As the surrounding properties have different roof forms, ridge heights and massing, the increase in bulk and scale resulting from the proposal, combined with the pallet of materials, would not introduce a visually dominant or incongruous feature within the streetscene.
8. As I observed on site, there are numerous examples within the surrounding area of properties that have either been extended or comprise modern infill exhibiting a variety of styles, materials and roof forms including dormer windows. There is no uniform design or character to this part of the village and in some cases extended properties sit next to smaller properties or on more densely developed sites. Even so, these relationships do not detract from the character and appearance of the area and instead add some interest and variety to the streetscene.
9. The proposed extensions would, as I confirmed, integrate well with the design and scale of the additions to Sanctuary Cottage. All the proposed changes would refresh the appearance of the host property, whose current design, whilst traditional, is somewhat simple in appearance. In this respect, I

disagree with the Council in that the proposal would, in my judgement, secure a high quality design that is an improvement on existing, that would in turn enhance the character and appearance of the appeal site and surrounding area.

10. Based on the above, I am satisfied that the proposed extensions, new roof dormer and Dutch Hip detailing would dovetail in well with the character of the area and would sit comfortably on the appeal site. As I confirmed earlier, the host property sits within a spacious plot that is more than capable of accommodating the proposed development. I accept that the proposed extensions would be visible from Stanbridge Lane and to a lesser extent the public right of way, but as the Appellant points out most extensions will be visible to some degree within the streetscene and the principal consideration is whether the extension(s) would integrate, respect and complement the character of the area and local distinctiveness. For the reasons set out above, the proposal is entirely acceptable in these respects. I am also satisfied that the new extensions would be proportional to the host and would not be visually intrusive within the landscape.
11. Accordingly, I find that the appeal proposal would be compliant with policies COM 11 (criterion (b) and (c)) and E1 of the TVLP and the corresponding policies of the Framework.

Other Matters

12. The appeal site lies within the setting of a Grade II Listed Building known as Coles Farm Cottage on Stanbridge Lane. Section 66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Area) Act 1990 requires, therefore, that special regard must be had to the desirability of preserving the setting of this heritage asset. Similar advice is to be found in the Framework and in the policies of the TVLP.
13. The Listed Building is located some 20 metres to the north west of the appeal site and as well as this distance separating the two, the orientation of the Listed Building and host property is very different. They are also physically separated by the lane itself and boundary treatment and landscaping. For all of these reasons, I am satisfied that the appeal proposal would have no impact on the setting of this Listed Building.

Conditions

14. The Council has suggested various conditions which I have considered against the advice in the Framework and the Planning Practice Guidance chapter on the use of planning conditions. Conditions requiring compliance with the submitted plans and for materials to reflect those shown on the application form or where appropriate to match existing, are necessary and reasonable to secure a high-quality development and to reflect the details included within the application. I have, however, added a list of approved plans for clarity.
15. I am not persuaded that a condition to require the new first floor bathroom windows on the south and north elevations to be obscure glazed would be acceptable. These windows face over the front and rear gardens to the host property and would be sited away from the common boundary with adjoining properties, in particular Sanctuary Cottage and separated further by existing boundary treatment and landscaping. Whilst these new windows may afford oblique views over parts of the gardens to adjoining properties, mutual

overlooking from upper floor windows is an inherent characteristic of properties that are sited close to each other or where they form part of a semi, as in this case. Moreover, neither of these windows would serve a habitable room and I note from the assessment in the Council's Delegated Report that Officers raised no concerns over the impact of these or any other new first floor windows on the living conditions of neighbouring occupiers.

16. Whilst it's possible that the Appellant may chose to use obscure glazing given the proposed use of these rooms, based on the above, there is, in my view, no justification for imposing such a restriction and the suggested condition is not, therefore, necessary or reasonable.

Conclusion

17. For the reasons given above and having taken all the matters raised into account, I conclude that the appeal should be allowed.

G Roberts

INSPECTOR