



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 16 January 2024

by S Harley BSc(Hons) M.Phil MRTPI ARICS

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 18th January 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/C1760/D/23/3330032

Middle Acre, Wildhern, Andover, Hampshire, SP11 0JF

- 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 Long against the decision of Test Valley Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 23/01209/FULLN, dated 10 May 2023, was refused by notice dated 31 July 2023.
 - The development proposed is garage link and porch extensions, alterations including changes to glazing, render and roofing.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for garage link and porch extensions, alterations including changes to glazing, render and roofing at Middle Acre, Wildhern, Andover, Hampshire SP11 0JF in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref 23/01209/FULLN, dated 10 May 2023, and the plans submitted with it, subject to the conditions set out in the attached Schedule.

Preliminary Matter

2. In November 2023 Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty were re-named as National Landscapes in recognition of their national importance. The North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty will now be known as the North Wessex Downs National Landscape (the NWDNL). The appeal site and surroundings are in the NWDNL which is afforded the highest level of protection to safeguard the natural beauty of its landscape. Its special character derives from the topography and vegetation associated with chalk downlands as influenced by human activity over the ages including small settlements and scattered houses.

Main Issues

3. The main issues are the effect of the proposals on the character and appearance of the area; and the effect on protected species and biodiversity.

Reasons

Character and appearance

4. Middle Acre is a detached dwelling with accommodation in the steep roof space and a dining room that projects towards a tall double garage with loft over. It is in the countryside outside the main residential area of Wildhern but near to a number of other dwellings scattered along the road to Upton. The appeal buildings are at a slightly higher-level than the road. However views of them

are restricted by an electric gate, which is mostly kept closed, and fences/hedges so most of the time only the upper parts of the buildings can be seen. Parts of the appeal property, and of nearby properties, can also be glimpsed in distant views from public rights of way and Dines Copse Lane.

5. The proposed white render and timber cladding facing materials would be much lighter and brighter than the more muted tones of the existing brown bricks and tile cladding. This would draw more attention to the built form particularly when newly installed. However, it would be little different to other properties with white/light facing walls in the locality including at White Hill House and Dilly House a little further along the same road.
6. The roof tiles would be replaced with a standing seam grey zinc roof and the sides of the proposed porch would be aluminium clad. Such materials are not characteristic for houses in the local area but metal cladding are often found on other buildings in the countryside.
7. The Council considers that, on its own, the roof would not impact on the landscape to the same degree as the white walls but that the combination of the dark grey zinc and white walls would accentuate the contrast. However, it is likely most roof colours would contrast with white render, and dark roofs and light walls are not uncharacteristic for example Hern Cottage to the south has a similar colour combination. As such the proposed colour of materials would not be incongruous in this part of the countryside and the NWDNL.
8. The profile of a zinc roof would be sleeker and more modern in appearance than that of a traditional tiled roof. However, the overall appearance would not be so different to that of slate roofs so as to justify refusal in this case where the appeal property is detached and the nearest properties would rarely be visible in the same view.
9. The modest main front door would be replaced with a two-storey flat roofed porch. This would be fully glazed at the front and clad with aluminium at the sides. The porch might look incongruous in relation to the appearance of the dwelling and garage as they currently exist. However, the proposals include re-facing the existing buildings at the same time. Accordingly, the appearance of the resultant dwelling would form a coherent whole rather than the extension elements being at odds with the buildings that exist now.
10. The upper part of the glazed porch would add some bulk to the roof line. However, it's roof would be well below the ridge of the main roof, well set back from the side wall nearest the road, and project only slightly in front of the front wall. It would be shielded in most views by the existing garage and dining room projection and surrounding topography and vegetation. It would only be noticeable from a small stretch of road directly in front of the property and so would not be harmful to the wider landscape. Although unusual it would add an interesting design feature to a somewhat unremarkable building.
11. The flat roof, single storey timber link extension; single garage door; and changes to and new windows, aluminium frames, glazed balcony balustrade, skylights and rear patio are acceptable in appearance.
12. The extent and arrangements of the proposed windows could result in light spill which could be harmful to the dark skies of the NWDNL. Mitigation is proposed

by way of a Lighting Strategy set out in the Technical Report. This includes the use of down lighters and skylight blinds that automatically close at dusk.

13. I conclude the proposals would not have a harmful effect on the character or appearance of the area and would conserve the landscape and scenic beauty of the NWDNL. I find no conflict with Policies E1, E2 or COM11 of the Test Valley Borough Revised Local Plan 2016 (the LP) in seeking high quality design which conserves landscape character and allows for extensions to dwellings

Protected species and biodiversity

14. Bats are protected under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 and the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, as amended. The Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (Bats) concludes there is negligible potential for roosting bats in the house or detached garage internally or externally. The survey for the Appraisal found that the buildings are in good condition offering no roosting opportunities and found no evidence of bats within the house or garage/converted loft. Accordingly, there would be no loss of biodiversity as a result of the proposals and there is no indication that other protected species or habitats would be affected. Moreover, the grant of planning permission would not override the need to protect bats under the provisions of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 as amended. Should bats be found during the works all works should stop and further advice should be sought.
15. I conclude there would be no demonstrable effect on bats or their habitats and therefore no loss of biodiversity as a result of the proposals. Accordingly, there would be no conflict with Policy E5 of the LP which permits development that conserves, and where possible restores and/or enhances, biodiversity.

Conditions

16. I have considered the Council's suggested conditions and where appropriate amended the wording to more closely align with the Planning Practice Guidance. As well as the standard condition specifying the time limits for the commencement of development, compliance with the approved plans and with the submitted details for external materials are necessary to provide certainty and in the interests of the appearance of the area.
17. The implementation of the Lighting Strategy and control over future lighting are necessary in the interests of dark skies. If implementation of the proposals is delayed beyond 12 months from the date of the bat survey, in accordance with the submitted Ecological Appraisal, it would be necessary to establish whether the position in relation to bats had altered by way of further survey and I have imposed a condition to this effect.

Conclusion

18. For the reasons given I conclude that the appeal should succeed.

S Harley

INSPECTOR

Schedule of Conditions

- 1) The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than three years from the date of this decision.
- 2) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans:
 - plan 23001/pl02/b submitted 22.05.2023
 - proposed elevations 23001/pl/09 b submitted 22.05.2023
 - proposed first floor plan 23001/pl/08b submitted 22.05.2023
 - proposed ground floor plan 23001/pl/07 b submitted 22.05.2023
 - proposed side/rear elevations 23001/pl/10 a submitted 22.05.2023
 - site location plan 23001/pl/01b submitted 22.05.2023.
- 3) The external surfaces of the development hereby permitted shall be constructed in the materials specified on the submitted application form.
- 4) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the Scope of Mitigation (Paragraph 11) and Lighting Strategy (Appendix 1) as stated in the Technical Report (Designs for Lighting Ltd September 2023) and shall be retained thereafter with no other external lighting installed and any replacement lighting to accord with the Lighting Strategy.
- 5) In accordance with the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (Bats) if, for whatever reason, there is a time delay of greater than 12 months between the accompanying survey (dated 23 May 2023) and the commencement of work, then the survey should be repeated prior to any works to the existing buildings taking place. The results of that survey together with any avoidance, mitigation or enhancement measures shall be submitted to the local planning authority for written approval before such works commence. No development shall take place other than in accordance with the approved measures.

End of Schedule