



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 7 February 2024

by Eleni Randle BSc (hons) MSc FRICS FAAV MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 15th February 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/P3800/D/23/3333166

Hazelhurst, Hobbles Green, Cowlinge, Suffolk CB8 9HX

- 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 & Mrs Simon & Susan Wilson against the decision of West Suffolk Council.
 - The application Ref DC/23/0757/HH dated 12 May 2023, was refused by notice dated 25 August 2023.
 - The development proposed is a. two storey front and rear extension with balcony (following demolition of existing porch) b. alterations and replacements to fenestration to side and rear elevations c. roof mounted PV array to front and side elevations d. roof lights to rear elevation e. replacement roof f. cladding to all elevations.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed, and planning permission is granted for a. two storey front and rear extension with balcony (following demolition of existing porch) b. alterations and replacements to fenestration to side and rear elevations c. roof mounted PV array to front and side elevations d. roof lights to rear elevation e. replacement roof f. cladding to all elevations at Hazelhurst, Hobbles Green, Cowlinge, Suffolk CB8 9HX in accordance with the terms of the application ref: DC/23/0757/HH dated 12 May 2023 subject to the following conditions:
 - 1) The development hereby permitted shall be commenced before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission;
 - 2) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: 207-SP-12 (location and block plan), 207-SP-10 (proposed block plan), 207-SP-11 A (proposed view), 207-SP-04 F (proposed ground floor plan), 207-SP-05 H (proposed first floor plan), 207-SP-06 G (proposed ground roof plan), 207-SP-07 I (proposed elevations) and 207-SP-14 A (proposed elevations with neighbouring ridge heights);
 - 3) The materials utilised within the development hereby permitted shall match those specified within the application form and the submitted plans – slate roof and timber effect horizontal cladding (dark colour). The materials will be maintained for the lifetime of the development and any changes shall be submitted to, and approved in writing by, the Local Planning Authority.

Procedural Matters

2. I have utilised the Council's description of the development as per the decision notice as I feel it more concisely describes the development than that on the application form, however, whilst it remains within the description the balcony area within the original plans is, on the revised plans, now incorporated into

the master bedroom as shown on the proposed first floor plan for the avoidance of doubt.

3. Since the determination of the application (but after the submission of this appeal in November 2023) a revised National Planning Policy Framework 2023 (the Framework) was adopted on 5 September 2023. The Framework was then revised in response to the Levelling-Up and Regeneration Bill: reforms to national planning policy consultation on 19 December 2023. The refusal reason generically references the Framework however, it is not considered that this impacts upon the determination of this appeal given the main changes to the Framework and the main issues before me.

Main Issue

4. The main issue is the impact of the proposal upon the character and appearance of the host dwelling and the surrounding area.

Reasons

5. The appeal site stands within a small cluster of dwellings along Hall Road with the properties in question standing in well-established gardens within a wider area which is agricultural in nature and general appearance. The appeal site is accessed off a long drive and is orientated so that it does not face directly onto the road. The host dwelling is a linear, single storey, building with a pitched roof, gable ends to both ends as well as there being a central porch area over the front door (which would be removed as part of the proposals). I note from the documents before me, and the planning history, that the property has previously been extended but I have limited evidence as to the extent of this within the appeal documentation before me. The appeal site is located, in planning terms, within the open countryside.
6. The proposal seeks to add additional volume to the central part of the host dwelling. It would also include cladding the external envelope of the property to incorporate external insulation, behind the cladding system, as well as replacement windows and doors and some changes to the current fenestration. A solar array is proposed as part of an integrated system into the roof with the current pantile roof tiles being replaced with slate. The existing finish of the host dwelling is render with red brick plinth and I noted, during my site visit, that there is no consistent material palette within the dwellings within the vicinity of the appeal site. The nearby dwellings are notably different in their character and appearance as both a result of design and finishing materials.
7. The proposed change to the finishing materials would notably alter the appearance of the host dwelling, however, as a result of there being no uniform or consistent finishing material in the locality, I find that the proposed changes to the finishing materials would not be harmful to neither the character nor appearance of the locality. The changes proposed would, I find, offer an opportunity to sustainably upgrade and modernise the existing dwelling within a location which has no notably defined character or appearance to which it needs to be consistent with. The use of timber effect horizontal cladding is, I find, appropriate within a rural setting when also considering that the host dwelling was originally a stable building prior to conversion.
8. The current low linear frontage of the host dwelling does, to some extent, typify the existing character of the host dwelling but I do not find that the

proposal sets to disrupt, significantly and materially, that built form character in a harmful way. The proposed extension would be overall limited in terms of the the total width of the host dwelling, when viewed from the front and rear elevations. Whilst the proposal would be visible within some public views, I find this would generally be viewed within a small cluster of dwellings which are all individual as outlined. The maximum height of the proposal, which would ultimately be for a limited part of the overall dwelling with the remainder staying single storey, is consistent with the general height of dwellings that are within the locality and within which those passing the site would view or consider the proposal.

9. The nearest dwelling (Long House), against which the proposal would be viewed, is a true two-storey dwelling with an ancillary building which already exceeds the height of the host dwelling on the appeal site and indeed the dwellings in Hobbles Green are of overall generous size. Given the strong variation in both character and appearance within the locality, and taking into account the general scale, design and finish of the dwellings nearby, I find that the proposal would respect the character of the immediate and surrounding area. The proposal would not result in overdevelopment of the dwelling curtilage, and it would not adversely affect the residential amenities of occupiers of nearby properties.
10. The host dwelling is set back into the appeal site, and I acknowledge that the two-storey element would be visible within the public realm from Hobbles Green. Joint Development Management Policies Document 2015 (LP) Policy DM2 requires proposals to respect the character, scale, density, and massing of the locality and taking into account the evidence before me I am satisfied that the proposal is consistent with these objectives. I note, however, that in addition to criteria a, b & c, LP Policy DM24 goes on to outline that proposals for the alteration or extension of an existing dwelling in the countryside will also be required to demonstrate that it is subordinate in scale and proportion to the original dwelling. The objective of this policy is, however, to maintain the character and appearance of the countryside, avoid significant visual impact and avoid urban characteristics. The proposal is consistent with these objectives, and I do not find that the proposal is unsuitable development.
11. I note that the dwelling is stated to have already been extended, and I am mindful of the requirement of LP Policy DM24, as outlined above. Despite this I note, from the description within the Council's delegated report, application SE/09/1541 allowed for the erection of a single storey side extension which was following demolition of an existing conservatory. The Council have not submitted, as part of this appeal, details of previous extensions nor any evidence of assessment as to the original dwelling in terms of, for example, footprint and/or volume which would contribute to the overall assessment as to the original dwelling. The scheme is, evidently, generous, but I do not find that the introduction of the proposed addition would bring such considerable material conflict with the policies, and their objectives, outlined due to the size and scale of the proposal for what would essentially be limited to a central element.
12. When viewed from the southwest and northeast elevations respectively, the protrusion either side of the property appears appropriate and whilst there is an evident increase in overall height from the side elevations, I find that this is limited in terms of overall visual impact taking into account the total width of

the long, linear, property. I find that the proposal would be appropriate in proportion as a result of the revisions which took place within the application process. I find that the extension would now be subordinate as I find that the overall long, low design of the host dwelling would remain the more dominant, original, feature of the host dwelling. The proposal would clearly read an extension to/evolution of the existing building with the main changes being restricted to the central part of the host property as shown on the submitted plans.

13. The proposal would be consistent with LP Policy DM2 which requires the proposals for all developments should produce designs that respect the character, scale, density and massing of the location and LP Policy DM24, which requires proposals to respect the character, scale and designs of existing dwellings and the character and appearance of the immediate and surrounding area and not result in overdevelopment of the dwelling curtilage and be subordinate to the host dwelling.
14. The proposal would also be consistent with LP Policy DM5 which permits extended buildings in accordance with other policies within the plan and St Edmundsbury Core Strategy 2010 Policy CS3 which seeks that proposals should have regard for local context and should enhance the character and appearance of the area. The proposal would be consistent with paragraph 139 (previously paragraph 134) of the Framework given that I find that the proposal is well designed, and the Council have not, in this case, specified any local design guidance or supplementary planning documents such as design guides or codes which the proposal would be contrary to or inconsistent with.

Conditions

15. The Council's questionnaire suggests two conditions in the event this appeal is allowed, and I have applied these. A time condition is attached to comply with Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. A condition requiring the development to be in accordance with the approved plans is required to control and define the development which is granted consent. A materials condition is required to ensure an appropriate finish in accordance with the details submitted, as assessed, as part of the application process.

Conclusion

16. For the reasons outlined above, and taking account all other matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should be allowed subject to conditions.

Eleni Randle

INSPECTOR