



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 7 November 2023 by Max Webb BA(Hons) MSc MRTPI

Decision by L McKay MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 29 February 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/W0340/D/23/3327002

Russetts, Webbs Lane, Beenham, Reading, West Berkshire RG7 5LH

- 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 John Lewington against the decision of West Berkshire District Council.
 - The application Ref 23/01051/HOUSE, dated 29 April 2023, was refused by notice dated 21 July 2023.
 - The development proposed is described as “detached double garage in front garden with tiled pitched roof and timber clad elevations to match existing property”.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Appeal Procedure

2. The site visit was undertaken by a representative of the Inspector whose recommendation is set out below and to which the Inspector has had regard before deciding the appeal.

Preliminary Matters

3. The Government published on 19 December 2023 a revised version of the National Planning Policy Framework (Framework). Whilst I have had regard to the revised national policy as a material consideration, planning decisions must still be made in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. In this instance, the issues most relevant to the appeal remain unaffected by the revisions to the Framework. I am therefore satisfied that there is no requirement to seek further submissions on the revised Framework, and that no party would be disadvantaged by such a course of action.
4. On 22 November 2023, all designated Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) in England and Wales became “National Landscapes” (NLs). I have therefore made reference to NLs in my recommendation and specifically referred to the North Wessex Downs AONB as the North Wessex Downs National Landscape (NWDNL). However, for the avoidance of doubt, the legal designation and policy status of these areas are unchanged and I have proceeded on this basis.
5. The appellant has submitted an amended plan with the appeal, for a smaller building closer to the main dwelling. This would form a substantial change from the original plan considered by the Council and interested parties. Due to when this amendment was submitted, interested parties will not have had the chance to comment on these changes and could therefore be prejudiced if I were to

accept the amended plan. As a result, I have considered this appeal on the basis of the original plans, against which the Council made its decision.

Main Issue

6. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the host dwelling and the surrounding area, including the NWDNL.

Reasons for the Recommendation

7. The appeal site is located in an area of countryside, with properties on this side of Webbs Lane situated on reasonably large plots with spacious, largely undeveloped frontages, generally enclosed by hedges. Around Webbs Lane are open fields, with the village of Beenham a short distance away. This forms the character of the surrounding area and the NWDNL in the vicinity of the appeal site. The appeal property itself is a modest chalet style bungalow with a spacious frontage, characteristic of those in this row of dwellings. The appeal site therefore contributes positively to the character of the area.
8. Many of the properties around the appeal site feature garages, some of which are set forward of the dwelling, however they generally remain close to the host properties and set well back from the front boundary.
9. The proposal seeks to add a large double garage, with a pitched roof and materials to match the existing dwelling. However, due to its scale it would appear out of proportion and not subservient to the host dwelling. Other large garages in the vicinity of the appeal property are related to larger dwellings and therefore respect the scale of their host properties, which would not be the case here.
10. Furthermore, the garage would be positioned close to the front boundary and take up a large area of the front garden. This would detract from the spacious character of the appeal site, which would be detrimental to the character of the street and wider NWDNL. The appeal proposal would also be intrusively close to the boundary, which would exacerbate the loss of the open frontage. The proposal would be significantly taller than the existing hedges, so they would provide limited screening, and their presence would not reduce the harm to an acceptable level.
11. The siting of the proposed garage would also contrast with other properties in the area, including The Hollies, Four Spires, Valley View and The Ridge House, which have garages projecting forwards but that are either positioned close to or attached to the host dwellings. These other examples therefore respect the spacious frontages and character of the area, unlike the appeal proposal.
12. The appellant has suggested they are planning to construct an extension to the side of the dwelling so would be unable to position a garage to the side or rear. It is unclear whether planning permission has been granted for an extension, and I have very limited details of its proposed size and appearance. Therefore, it has not been demonstrated that the appeal dwelling would be extended to a size where the proposed garage would appear proportionate. Furthermore, even if the house were extended, this would not necessarily justify the construction of a large garage close to the front boundary.

13. Overall, the proposed development would harm the character and appearance of the host dwelling and the surrounding area, including the NWDNL in the vicinity of the appeal site. It would therefore conflict with Policy C6 of the West Berkshire Housing Site Allocations Development Plan Document (2006-2026) (adopted May 2017), which permits extensions and alterations providing that the scale is subservient and in character with the host dwelling and not have an adverse effect on the setting and space occupied within a plot. It would also not comply with Policies CS14 and CS19 of the West Berkshire Core Strategy (2006-2026) Development Plan Document (adopted July 2012), which outline how development must demonstrate high quality design which respects and enhances the character and appearance of the area, including by ensuring it is appropriate in terms of location and scale in the context of the existing settlement form, pattern and character.
14. The proposal would also go against the aims of the West Berkshire House Extensions Supplementary Planning Guidance (adopted July 2004), which outlines how garages can be dominant and unsympathetic, and that garages projecting forward should not dominate. It would likewise be contrary to the Beenham Village Design Statement (adopted July 2003), which highlights that the visual impact of the location and design of garages on their surroundings and wider street scene should be considered. It would further conflict with the policies of the Framework which require high quality design that takes opportunities to improve the quality of an area.

Conclusion and Recommendation

15. The proposal would conflict with the Local Plan and national policy, and there are no material considerations that justify granting planning permission in conflict with the development plan. For the reasons given above and having had regard to all other matters raised, I recommend that the appeal should be dismissed.

Max Webb

APPEAL PLANNING OFFICER

Inspector's Decision

16. I have considered all the submitted evidence and the Appeal Planning Officer's report and agree with the reasoning set out above. The proposal conflicts with the development plan and there are no material considerations which outweigh the harm to the character and appearance of the area. On that basis the appeal is dismissed.

L McKay

INSPECTOR