



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 16 April 2024

by Chris Couper BA (Hons) Dip TP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 24th April 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/C1570/D/24/3338931

Whitehouse Farmhouse, Whitehouse Road, Stebbing, Essex CM6 3BY

- 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 D and Mrs L Mountain against the decision of Uttlesford District Council.
 - The application Ref UTT/23/2491/HHF, dated 3 October 2023, was refused by notice dated 24 November 2023.
 - The development proposed is demolition of the existing conservatory and existing single storey rear projection, and the construction of a two storey side extension and a two storey rear extension.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for the demolition of the existing conservatory and existing single storey rear projection, and the construction of a two storey side extension and a two storey rear extension at Whitehouse Farmhouse, Whitehouse Road, Stebbing, Essex CM6 3BY in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref UTT/23/2491/HHF, dated 3 October 2023, subject to the following conditions:
 - 1) The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than 3 years from the date of this decision.
 - 2) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: 21.7583/P211, 22.7780/E101, 22.7780/E102, 22.7780/E103, 22.7780/M001, 22.7780/M002, 22.7780/P212 B, 22.7780/P213 B and 22.7780/P214.
 - 3) The materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of the development shall match those used in the existing building.

Background

2. Whitehouse Farmhouse has a fairly extensive planning history, which includes planning permission and a certificate of lawfulness for single storey extensions (Ref: UTT/22/0553/PDE and UTT/22/0545/CLP) ('approved extensions'), and a certificate of lawfulness for a swimming pool outbuilding (Ref: UTT/22/0544/CLP) ('approved outbuilding'). I refer to those decisions in my reasoning below.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the host property and the area.

Reasons

4. Whitehouse Farmhouse sits on a substantial plot, in a fairly open and flat landscape of large fields, hedgerows and woodlands. The property has twin gables to the front, which give it a well-balanced appearance from the road, gabled dormers to the rear, and single storey sections to the front, side and rear.
5. There are generally well-scattered, houses along Whitehouse Road and Lubberhedges Lane. These vary considerably in their size and style, although most have well-balanced front elevations, often with subordinate additions to the rear or sides. Around one mile to the west, on a corner with Clay Lane, lies Holly Tree House. It is a substantial, prominently positioned property, which displays twin two storey projections to the front and rear.
6. As a result of this scheme, a third front-facing gable would be introduced to Whitehouse Farmhouse, which would mirror the style and proportions of the slightly set down gable to the other side, thus ensuring that the dwelling would retain a balanced appearance. That side extension would attach to a two storey rear projection, which would be set down from the host's ridge, and which would extend across the whole rear face of the property.
7. Whilst the proposed extensions would increase the host's bulk, the resultant dwelling would still sit comfortably within its spacious plot, and it would remain set well back from Whitehouse Road, such that it would not dominate the streetscene. The rear extension would be set well down below the host's ridge, which would help to break up the building's mass.
8. As evidenced by Elevations B and D, the set down rear extension would result in a slightly complex form, but it would not be prominent from public vantage points given its rearward location. Views of Elevation B from Whitehouse Road would be partially screened by landscaping around the plot's southern boundary, and views of Elevation D from Whitehouse Road and Lubberhedges Lane would be limited due to a combination of the host's detached garage, large agricultural buildings and hedgerows.
9. Although Holly Tree House is not identical to this proposal as claimed, it is nonetheless a substantial extended building which forms part of the area's established character. In the context of the area, the resultant property here would not appear out of place.
10. I have also had regard to the site's planning history, including a previously refused application (Ref: UTT/21/1110/HHF). However, having considered it on its planning merits, the scheme before me would not harm the character and appearance of the host property or the area, and it would not have an urbanising effect on the countryside as alleged by Stebbing Parish Council.
11. Given that conclusion, it is not necessary for me to consider whether or not the scheme would be less harmful than the approved extensions, which the appellant has cited as a potential fall back. Having regard to cumulative impacts, given their location, most of the approved extensions could not be constructed in addition to the scheme before me.
12. Finally, the appellant states that the approved outbuilding could be 'traded in' as part of the appeal proposal by means of a suitably worded planning condition removing householder permitted development rights. However, as

the outbuilding could be implemented prior to the development before me, even if I were to impose a condition withdrawing permitted development rights under Part 1 Class E of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended) it may not have the effect of preventing that development. Other than its principal elevation and volume, I have limited details of that outbuilding, but I note that it would be single storey and detached from the main house.

13. Neither Policies GEN2 or H8 of the Uttlesford Local Plan (2005) ('ULP') state that extensions shall be subordinate to the host, but they do require them to respect the scale, design and external materials of the original building, and to be compatible with the scale, form, layout and appearance of surrounding buildings.
14. For the above reasons, the scheme would not conflict with that approach, nor with the requirement of ULP Policy S7 for development to protect or enhance the appearance of the countryside. Having regard to the National Planning Policy Framework (December 2023) ('Framework'), the scheme would comply with its requirement in Section 12 for good design which is visually attractive as a result of good architecture, and which is sympathetic to local character, helping to maintain a strong sense of place.
15. Turning to the matter of conditions, I have considered those suggested against the Framework's tests. As well as the standard time limit, in the interests of certainty, a condition is necessary requiring that the development be carried out in accordance with the approved plans. Finally, in the interests of good design, I have imposed a matching materials condition.
16. Summing up, the proposal would not harm the character and appearance of the host property or the area. Having regard to all other matters raised, the appeal is therefore allowed.

Chris Couper

INSPECTOR