



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 10 December 2024

by A Tucker BA (Hons) IHBC

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 23rd December 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/W0340/W/24/3338748 Walnut Tree Cottage, Reading RG8 8QS

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mr Albert Hitchcock against the decision of West Berkshire District Council.
 - The application Ref is 23/01040/FULMAJ.
 - The development proposed is single-storey side garage extension.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed, and planning permission is granted for single-storey side garage extension at Walnut Tree Cottage, Reading RG8 8QS in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref 23/01040/FULMAJ, and subject to the conditions in the attached schedule.

Preliminary Matters

2. The Council is in the process of updating its Local Plan. This would appear to be at an advanced stage and the emerging Policies therefore attract reasonable weight.
3. On 12 December 2024 the Government published its revised National Planning Policy Framework (Framework). The content of the Framework relative to the main issues of the appeal is largely unchanged. It has not therefore been necessary to give the parties opportunity to comment on the revisions.

Main Issues

4. Whether the site is suitably located for the development proposed, and its effect on the character and appearance of the area, including the North Wessex Downs National Landscape (NWDNL).

Reasons

5. The appeal site is in a rural location. It is outside a settlement boundary and in an area that the Council views as open countryside. Policy ADPP1 of the West Berkshire Core Strategy (2006-2026) Development Plan Document (CS) sets out the Council's spatial strategy for the delivery of dwellings and associated infrastructure. It would thus appear to be irrelevant to a proposal for an extension to an outbuilding associated with an existing dwelling.
6. Policy C6 of the West Berkshire Council Housing Site Allocations DPD (2006-2026) (DPD) relates to extensions of existing dwellings within the countryside. Emerging Policy DM28 of the West Berkshire Local Plan Review 2022-2039 (LPR) specifically covers outbuildings as well and includes additional criteria to Policy C6. Many of these relate to matters of character and appearance.

7. The appeal site is away from existing settlements, with a small number of nearby dwellings that are mostly isolated from each other. The wider site is surrounded by a woodland, which can be accessed by a network of rights of way. It is within the NWDNL, which covers a large area and is described in the Management Plan¹ as a remote, expansive, and tranquil landscape. The site is in the Ashampstead Downs character area, which has considerable woodland cover.
8. The existing building can be glimpsed from the lane to the side of the property, but only from a limited area outside the existing gates. From here a small part of the top of the north end of the building is visible. There are some very limited views of the building from the woodland to the side. From these perspectives, only its solid tiled roof and dark weather boarding can be seen. It is not at all prominent to view.
9. The proposal would see the footprint of the building increase, by forming a lower return range that would connect to its existing south end. The extension would have no visual impact on views from the north owing to the high enclosing gates and substantial hedges.
10. From the woodland to the rear the extension would make the building modestly more prominent, as it would extend away from the boundary and out into the open area of lawn. However, views of the building would still be limited to occasional glimpses through the trees, and where visible the plain rear face of the extension would be seen with its limited openings and functional appearance. There is plenty of space to accommodate additional planting alongside the edge of the existing woodland that, if carefully planned, would be sufficient to manage this impact and ensure that no visual harm would arise from the proposal.
11. Thus, whilst the building would be large, I cannot agree that its scale would cause harm to the character or appearance of the area, or that it would have an urbanising influence on the wider NWDNL. Impacts such as additional lighting could be managed by an appropriately worded condition if the appeal is allowed.
12. Although distant from the existing dwelling, the relationship between the garage and dwelling already exists. Forming a return wing would better orientate the building towards the dwelling and enclose an area of hardstanding, whilst turning its back on the wider countryside to the south and west, and in this respect would modestly improve the arrangement. It would remain close to the tennis court, with a series of other intervening domestic features such as a swimming pool and area of formal gardens that would retain a clear spatial association with the dwelling.
13. The extension would be subservient to the existing building. The resultant building would be substantial when compared with the host dwelling. However, it would retain a functional appearance and, in this respect, would maintain a secondary presence, that would be clarified by its discreet siting at the far end of the garden.
14. As to the other aspects of Policy DM28 of the LPR, it would not harm the living conditions of nearby residents, impact upon parking provision, or private amenity space. Subject to appropriate conditions if the appeal is allowed, the proposal would not harm trees, and it would conserve and enhance biodiversity.
15. The Council suggests that the proposal would be tantamount to a new dwelling. This could be said of the existing building, and the proposal is not for an

¹ North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan 2019-2024

independent use. It also suggests that the proposal as more akin to a B8 storage use. I am however satisfied that the use is genuine, based on the evidence before me and what I observed on site. If the appeal is allowed, a condition could be used to ensure that it remains in an ancillary residential use.

16. In summary, the site is suitably located for the development proposed and the proposal would not harm the character or appearance of the area and would conserve the landscape and scenic beauty of the NWDNL, in accordance with Paragraph 189 of the Framework. It would also accord with Policies C3 and C6 of the DPD, Policies CS14 and CS19 of the CS and Policy DM28 of the LPR. Together these Policies seek to avoid harm to the character and appearance of the area, including the NWDNL, and ensure buildings are well designed.

Other Matters

17. The host dwelling is a grade II listed building². Section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (LBCA) requires the decision maker to have special regard to the desirability of preserving a listed building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses. The Council is of the view that the proposal would not harm the significance of the listed building. Based on the evidence before me and my own observations on site, taking into account the distance between the site and the listed building, lack of intervisibility and various intervening buildings that are of no historic significance, I can see no reason to reach an alternative conclusion.

Conditions

18. I have had regard to the conditions suggested by the Council. I have considered these against the tests in the Framework and the advice in the Planning Practice Guidance. I have imposed condition 2 to specify the approved plans, to give certainty.
19. Condition 3 is necessary to secure the protection of trees that could be affected by the proposal, including those in the adjacent woodland that are close to the area of the proposed extension. Conditions 4 and 5 are necessary to safeguard protected species and secure biodiversity enhancements. Materials are proposed to match those used on the existing building. Condition 6 secures this and is necessary to safeguard the character and appearance of the area.
20. Condition 7 is necessary to secure additional landscaping and in particular additional tree planting to manage the visual impact of the building where it can be glimpsed from the adjacent right of way. Condition 8 is necessary to ensure that any new lighting does not result in light spill that could harm the rural character of the area, and to manage biodiversity impacts. Condition 9 is necessary to provide certainty regarding the use of the extension, acknowledging its scale, distance from the dwelling and separate access.
21. I do not consider it necessary to impose a condition to require the submission of a construction method statement. The site is large and enclosed. It provides ample area for the secure storage of materials, plant, and vehicles. I consider it highly unlikely that the right of way would be obstructed for such purposes and therefore do not consider such a condition to be reasonable.

² List Entry Number: 1212115

Conclusion

22. For the reasons given above the appeal should be allowed.

A Tucker

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 drawing nos. 5015119 RDG XX ST PL A 202 Rev F, 5015119 RDG XX ST PL A 101, 5015119 RDG XX ST PL A 104, 5015119 RDG XX ST PL A 105 Rev D, 5015119 RDG XX ST PL A 0200, and 5015119 RDG XX ST PL A 0210.
- 3) No development or other operations shall commence on site until an arboricultural method statement has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority and shall include details of the implementation, supervision and monitoring of:
 - a) all temporary tree protection (including ground protection),
 - b) and any special construction works within any defined tree protection area.
- 4) No development shall take place until details of a minimum of three bat boxes around the site or within the extension are submitted and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. These measures shall be installed before the extension is brought into use.
- 5) Prior to the commencement of the construction of the extension the Local Planning Authority must be provided with either:
 - a) A licence issued by Natural England pursuant to Regulation 53 of The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 authorising the specified activity/development to go ahead; or
 - b) A statement in writing from Natural England to the effect that it does not consider that the specified activity/development will require a licence.
- 6) The external materials of the extension hereby permitted shall match those used in the existing building/dwelling.
- 7) The extension shall not be first brought into use until a detailed soft landscaping scheme has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The soft landscaping scheme shall include detailed plans, planting and retention schedule, programme of works, and any other supporting information. All soft landscaping works shall be completed in accordance with the approved soft landscaping scheme within the first planting season after the extension is first brought into use. Any trees, shrubs, plants or hedges planted in accordance with the approved scheme which are removed, die, or become diseased or become seriously damaged within five years of planting shall be replaced within the next planting season by trees, shrubs, plants or hedges of a similar size and species to that originally approved.
- 8) No new external lighting shall be installed until a lighting strategy has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The strategy shall:
 - a) Identify those areas on the site that are particularly sensitive for bats and that are likely to cause disturbance,

- b) Show how and where external lighting will be installed so that it can be clearly demonstrated that areas to be lit will not disturb or prevent the above species,
- c) Include isolux contour diagram(s) of the proposed lighting, and
- d) Ensure all lighting levels are designed within the limitations of Environmental Lighting, Zone 1, as described by the Institute of Lighting Engineers.

No external lighting shall be installed on the extension to the garage except in accordance with the above strategy.

- 9) The extension to the garage hereby permitted shall not be occupied at any time other than for purposes ancillary and/or incidental to the residential use of the dwelling known as Walnut Tree Cottage.