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# Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 17 April 2025

by **O Tresise MSc MA MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 09 June 2025

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**Appeal Ref: APP/K0425/D/25/3360558**

**Westfield, The Drive, Bourne End, Buckinghamshire SL8 5RE**

- 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 and Mrs W Andrews against the decision of Buckinghamshire Council.
  - The application Ref is 24/07243/FUL.
  - The development proposed is Householder application for construction of part two-storey side / part single-storey rear extension with roof terrace following replacement of existing garage, loft conversion with 3 dormers to front and 3 dormers to rear, replacement of front porch with entrance canopy, covered patio, changes to roof finish and fenestration and associated external landscaping.
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## Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

## Preliminary Matters

2. In the banner heading above I have taken the description of development from that used on the appeal form and decision notice rather than the application form, as the description of development has been agreed by both main parties.
3. Since the appeal was lodged, the National Planning Policy Framework (Framework) has been revised. However, I am satisfied that there are no changes of any consequence for the main issues in this appeal.
4. At my site visit, I observed that a two-storey side extension and a single storey rear extension have been partially constructed. The appellant also indicated that planning permission, 24/07968/FUL, and a Certificate of Lawfulness, 24/06700/CLP, were granted. However, I have not been provided details of these cases. Nevertheless, I have considered the proposed development as shown on the plans provided, rather than what has been built on site.

## Main Issues

5. The main issues are the effect of the proposed development on:
  - the character and appearance of the host property and the Abbotsbrook Conservation Area (ACA),
  - the living conditions of the occupiers of Sentosa in respect of privacy.

## Reasons

### *Character and Appearance*

6. The appeal site is situated in the eastern side of the ACA. Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Area) Act 1990 (the Act) requires me to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area.
7. The ACA covers an area encompassing the early 20<sup>th</sup> century planned settlement, which lies between the historic hamlet of Well End and the River Thames in Bourne End. Its significance is derived, in part, from the planned layout, which is related to its historic landscape, mature trees, watercourses and attractive early 20<sup>th</sup> century houses and cottages in a distinctive Vernacular Revival style. The appeal property consists of a two-storey detached dwelling, situated on a spacious ground. It's simple built form, use of traditional materials, and well-proportioned fenestration make a positive contribution to the significance of the ACA.
8. The Abbotsbrook Conservation Area Character Survey (2006) (ACA Character Survey) states that the ACA has no listed buildings, nevertheless, it identified a number of buildings as being of architectural and stylistic interest. A group of 'Semis on the Drive' including Langholme, The Birches, Streamside, Briar Holme and Bridge End, was identified due to their architectural characters and specific qualities. The appellant suggests that none of these properties are referenced as being a Non-Designated Heritage Asset (NDHA), and there are no published documents or planning history to identify them as NDHAs. Whilst I appreciate that these buildings have not been explicitly expressed as NDHAs in the past, they have clearly been described in the ACA Survey, which also explained how these buildings contribute to the significance of the ACA. In this instance, based on my observations and the information provided, these properties and their setting form part of the character and appearance of the ACA. They make significant positive contributions to the significance of the ACA, as a whole.
9. Considering the proposed two-storey side extension, although it would be subservient to the host building, the proposed cladding would detract from the established character and appearance of both the building and the wider area. In particular, the use of vertical timber cladding on all three sides would be at odds with the identified key characteristic of half-timbering, as set out in the ACA Character Survey.
10. The proposed single storey rear extension would run the length of the host building, and it would also project further to the rear of the proposed two storey side extension to create a covered patio area. The proposed roof terrace would be positioned between two sedum roofs. Whilst I appreciate that balconies are a feature of many houses in the area, the combined scale of the extension and roof terrace would result in an oversized and incongruous addition that would dominate the character and appearance of the host building.
11. In relation to the proposed flat-roofed dormers, their positions would be in line with the windows on the first floor. However, their box-like appearance and bulky form would create incongruous features that fail to respect the roof form of the host building, and they would be harmful to the prevailing character and appearance of the ACA. This harmful effect would be exacerbated by the large number of dormers proposed.

12. Turning to the proposed entrance canopy, I appreciate that it would not reflect the roof form of the host dwelling. However, the proposed canopy would be very modest in scale. Accordingly, it would not, in itself, result in harm to the character or appearance of the host property. Whilst it may be visible from the public realm, it would not be harmful to the cohesive architectural characters of the ACA due to its slim design.
13. The enlarged window proposed on the first-floor front elevation would be disproportionately large in size, compared to the other windows of the host building. Its vertical emphasis would also detract from the cohesive appearance of the appeal property, and it would undermine the architectural integrity that contributes to the character and appearance of the ACA.
14. The appellant has drawn my attention to a number of examples in the area. I noted that cladding was used on the adjacent property, Troway, which has undergone substantial extensions and is prominent in the street scene. However, the cladding was only applied to the upper part of the gables. By contrast the walls of the proposed two-storey side extension would be finished with timber cladding on all three sides. Two of the examples, Sheerwater and Water Meadow, are modern developments, and my observations were that their flat-roofed structures and timber cladding are deliberate architectural elements of these properties. Consequently, they are very different from the appeal proposal. The appellant also mentioned Fir Trees and Langholme, which also have dormers. However, they are of different design and scale, and Fir Trees is not seen in the same context. I therefore find that none of these examples are directly comparable to the appeal proposal which I have, in any event, considered on its own planning merits.
15. Overall, whilst the proposed entrance canopy would not harm the character and appearance of the host building and the ACA, the proposed development, including the two-storey side extension, the single storey rear extension with roof terrace, dormers, and changes to the existing window on the first-floor front elevation, would not preserve or enhance the character or the appearance of the ACA. Accordingly, taking into account the scale and nature of the development, I find the harm to the significance of the ACA to be less than substantial, but nevertheless of considerable importance and weight in the planning balance of this appeal. Where a proposal leads to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, paragraph 215 of the Framework advises that this harm should be weighed against the public benefit of the proposal, including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.

#### *Public Benefits*

16. The proposal would provide a larger living accommodation in the area. Temporary economic benefits would arise through the construction of the proposed extensions and alterations. There would be some other benefits associated with new planting, biodiversity and habitat enhancements. However, due to its modest scale, such benefits would only be given a limited weight. I also note that the continued viable use of the appeal property as a dwelling, is not dependent on the appeal proposal, as the building has an on ongoing residential use that would not cease in its absence. As such, these benefits do not outweigh the great weight that should be given to the asset's conservation.

17. Accordingly, the proposal would conflict with Policies DM31, DM35 and DM36 of the Wycombe District Local Plan (Adopted August 2019), the Householder Planning and Design Guidance SPD (Adopted January 2020). Taken together, these require that development is designed to the highest standard, is in-keeping with the existing character of the host building and the area, as well as, to conserve, where possible, enhance the historic environment.

### *Living conditions*

18. Sentosa is a two-storey cottage, situated to the northwest of the appeal site. I appreciate that there would be a degree of separation between the appeal site and the neighbouring property, and that the proposed roof terrace would be positioned at an angle. The appellant suggests that the proposed roof terrace would only overlook the neighbours' driveway and hardstanding area for vehicles parking. My observations were that the front garden of the neighbouring dwelling appears to function as its primary outdoor amenity space, due to its orientation and siting. The introduction of a roof terrace would create an elevated vantage point that would result in an unacceptable level of overlooking and a loss of privacy for occupiers of both properties.
19. The appellant suggests that a privacy screen can be installed, however, there are little details about the height of the proposed balustrade. I do not have enough information from the submitted plans to determine whether it would be possible to achieve a balustrade of sufficient height for privacy. Given this uncertainty, it would not be appropriate to defer consideration of the details to a planning condition. Therefore, I am not convinced this would fully address my concerns. At my site visit, I observed a number of small trees growing along the boundary fence and they would provide a degree of screening effect when they reach their maturity. However, these trees would take some time to achieve their maturity and would only reduce the adverse effects but not to fully mitigate them.
20. Overall, the proposed development would harm the living conditions of the occupiers of Sentosa in respect to privacy. In this regard the development would be contrary to Policies CP9, DM35, and DM36 of the Wycombe District Local Plan (Adopted August 2019).

### **Conclusion**

21. The proposal conflicts with the development plan as a whole and the material considerations do not indicate that the appeal should be decided other than in accordance with it. Therefore, the appeal should be dismissed.

*O Tresise*

INSPECTOR