



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 21 July 2025

by **K E Down MA(Oxon) MSc MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 04 August 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/W0340/D/25/3367485

10 Alexander Road, Thatcham, RG19 4QU

- 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 Ken Miles against the decision of West Berkshire Council.
 - The application Ref is 25/00470/HOUSE.
 - The development proposed is: "Part retrospective – Alterations to rear elevations".
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for alterations to rear elevations at 10 Alexander Road, Thatcham, RG19 4QU in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref 25/00470/HOUSE, subject to the following conditions:
 - 1) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: Location plan, PBL 007.
 - 2) Within 3 months of the date of this decision, details of the proposed cladding shall be submitted to the Council in writing. Following their approval in writing by the Council, the development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.
 - 3) The alterations to the first floor rear elevations/extension hereby permitted shall be implemented within 6 months of the date of this decision. If within that 6 months the works have not been implemented, the extension shall be demolished and all materials resulting from the demolition shall be removed from the site within 9 months of the date of failure to implement the approved alterations.

Main Issue

2. There is one main issue which is the effect of the proposed extension on the character and appearance of the host dwelling and the surrounding area.

Procedural matter

3. The West Berkshire Local Plan Review 2023-2041 was adopted on 10 June 2025. This replaces the West Berkshire Core Strategy 2006-2026 and the policies referred to within the Council's decision notice. Policy CS14 has been replaced by Policy SP7 – Design Quality. This policy seeks high quality locally distinctive design to create places that are better for people and that enhance the character of the area. Policy CS19 has been replaced by specific landscape and heritage policies which the Council does not consider to be relevant to this appeal.

4. New Policy DM28 relates specifically to residential extensions and sets out criteria against which applications for extensions to dwellings should be assessed. The Council identifies criteria a), b) and e) as relevant. These expect extensions to be subservient to the original dwelling, to be of high quality design and to utilise appropriate materials such that they enhance the character and local distinctiveness of the area.
5. I have had regard to the replacement policies in my decision.

Background

6. The appeal dwelling, a semi-detached house, has an authorised first floor side extension. An unauthorised first floor extension was added to the rear, behind the side extension and part of the original rear elevation. This has eaves above the height of the main dwelling and was built with a window at roof level in the gable end. An application to regularise the extension was refused and dismissed on appeal (APP/W0340/D/19/3227901) on 30 July 2019.
7. Following enforcement action by the Council, appeals (APP/W0340/C/22/3306769 & 3306770) were dismissed on 31 January 2024 and the enforcement notice was upheld with a minor variation. The enforcement notice remains extant.
8. The enforcement appeals did not proceed under ground (a), that planning permission should be granted, and the Inspector explained in the decision that this meant that the planning merits of suggested amendments to the scheme to make it acceptable could not be considered under ground (f).
9. The current appeal is against the refusal of the Council to grant planning permission for those amendments.

Reasons

10. The appeal dwelling sits in a row of similar semi-detached houses on a street that slopes from north to south. The originally unattached pair, No 8, is set on higher ground and has a noticeably higher ridge and eave when viewed from the street. It is also set slightly forward of the appeal dwelling. Both the appeal dwelling and No 8 have first floor side extensions which join, completely closing the gap between the dwellings.
11. To the rear, both the appeal dwelling and No 8 have two storey rear extensions ending in gable ends. These have a similar depth, eaves and ridge height and the eaves almost touch. However, because the appeal dwelling is set on lower ground, the eaves of the rear extension are higher than that of the host dwelling. This gives the extension an incongruous, top heavy appearance where it meets the original rear elevation of the host dwelling, since the eye is drawn towards the awkward juxtaposition between the two. A window in the roof level gable end previously exacerbated this effect but had been blocked at the time of my site visit. Nevertheless, the elevated eave remained.
12. The proposed development would comprise the widening of the rear extension to the point where the eave of the extension would meet with and match that of the original dwelling. This would result in an asymmetric roof when viewed from the rear but would have the effect of integrating the extension with the host dwelling and reducing the top heavy appearance. A small feature hip created at the end of

the gable, coupled with the permanent removal of the roof level gable end window, would also assist in reducing this impression.

13. The Council is concerned that the additional width and the height of the extension, with a ridge that is just below the main ridge of the dwelling, would be bulky and disproportionate. However, whilst large, the proposed extension would remain subservient to the host dwelling, maintaining a lower ridge height and a width and depth that did not overwhelm the host dwelling. Moreover, I saw other similarly wide and high rear extensions in the immediate area, a number of which were readily visible in the street scene, and to my mind the scale of these did not appear incongruous or disproportionate. The appeal proposal would be substantially hidden, except from close neighbours, by its position in the street and dense vegetation at the appeal site and in adjoining gardens,
14. The Council is also concerned that the asymmetric roof would appear disjointed but, although different, I consider it an acceptable way of integrating the proposed extension both with its host dwelling and with the higher eaves height of the neighbouring extension at No 8. An additional window at first floor would be incorporated into the proposed widened extension but since this would replace an existing window in the original rear elevation, I find it acceptable.
15. The rear extension is currently clad in horizontal wood. It is proposed to remove this and replace it with interlocking cement planks with a woodgrain effect in dark grey. Whilst cladding is not common in the area, there are examples and I see no reason why a finish other than the traditional red brick of the dwellings would not be acceptable in the context of a development that is clearly an extension. However, no details of the proposed cladding are provided in evidence. Since I find the principle of cladding acceptable, the exact type and colour is a matter of detail, and I agree with the Council that this could be the subject of a planning condition.
16. It is proposed to remove an overhanging soffit adjacent to the rear extension at No 8 and to build a brick pier in line with the main building wall on the front boundary to provide better detailing. The Council does not object to these proposals nor to the installation of skylights in the south facing roof slope of the rear extension. I agree that they would be acceptable. Moreover, the removal of the overhanging soffit would increase the gap between the proposed extension and the one at No 8 and may improve access for completion and maintenance.
17. It is concluded on the main issue that the proposed alterations to the rear extension would have no materially detrimental effect on the character or appearance of the host dwelling or the surrounding area. In consequence, they would comply with the requirements of Policies SP7 and DM28 of the West Berkshire Local Plan Review 2023-2041, 2025.
18. Turning to conditions, I agree with the Council that the development should be carried out in accordance with the approved plans and also as set out above, that the details of the proposed cladding should be submitted to and approved in writing by the Council. I further agree that as the appeal proposal is for alterations to an existing unauthorised structure, the works should be subject to a specific timescale. All these are necessary to ensure a satisfactory effect on the character and appearance of the dwelling and the surrounding area.

19. I have adjusted the Council's suggested wording to ensure the conditions comply with the tests for planning conditions set out in paragraph 57 of the National Planning Policy Framework, 2024 and to ensure that the required details are submitted and the approved alterations implemented so as to make the development acceptable in planning terms. A strict timetable for compliance will be imposed because permission is being granted retrospectively, and so it is not possible to use a negatively worded condition to secure the approval of the cladding before the development takes place and it is important that the approved alterations are implemented in a timely fashion. The conditions will ensure that the development can be enforced against if the required details are not submitted for approval or the approved alterations are not implemented within the period set out in the relevant condition.
20. Third parties have raised a number of concerns regarding the proposed development to which I have had regard. In the context of character and appearance, as reasoned above, I find that the proposed development would be acceptable. With respect to the effect on living conditions, I agree with the Council that these would not be materially harmed, based on the development as proposed being completed in accordance with the approved plans. Various other issues are raised which appear to be civil matters. It is therefore not within my jurisdiction to have regard to these in the context of this appeal.
21. For the reasons set out above and having regard to all other matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should be allowed.

KE Down
INSPECTOR