

CASE OFFICER'S (KJ) REPORT ON APPLICATION NUMBER 24/01472/HOUSE



**Site: 64 Stephens Firs
Mortimer
Reading
RG7 3UY**

1. Site Description and Proposal

The application site relates to a two-storey semi-detached dwelling with an integral garage to the west side elevation, located to the north of Stephens Firs. Located within the settlement boundary of Mortimer, the area is predominantly residential in character with residential development to the north, east, south and west. Dwellings in the locality comprise of a mixture of brickwork two-storey semi-detached dwellings and detached/semi-detached bungalows.

The application seeks planning permission for the demolition of the existing rear conservatory and construction of a single storey rear extension measuring 5m in depth, alongside the erection of a first-floor side extension to the existing single storey garage structure to the west elevation. The proposal also involves the conversion of the existing hipped roof to a gable.

It is noted that amended plans were requested to set the first-floor side extension back from the front elevation and reduce the height to ensure it remains subordinate to the existing dwelling, however the agent has rejected this request and attempted to justify this, which will be discussed further in the following sections.

2. Representations

Highways - no objection.

Parish Council - no objection.

3. Procedural Matters

Publicity: The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015 (DMPO) requires that the application be publicised by giving requisite notice:

- (a) by site display in at least one place on or near the land to which the application relates for not less than 21 days; or
- (b) by serving the notice on any adjoining owner or occupier.

A site notice was displayed at the end of the driveway on 11/09/2024, the deadline for representations expired on 02/10/2024. The authority has therefore discharged its duty to publicise applications in accordance with the DMPO.

CIL: The increase in internal floor space of the proposed house extension is less than 100m². Under the Community Infrastructure Levy Charging Schedule adopted by West Berkshire Council and the government Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations, house extensions of less than 100m² are not liable to pay the Community Infrastructure Levy.

4. Relevant Site History

87/30042/ADD - Demolition of existing single storey building and erection of single storey garage utility and porch. Approved.

07/01542/HOUSE - Loft conversion to form store with rear dormer window. Approved.

10/02899/HOUSE - Conservatory to the rear of the property. Approved.

5. Policy Considerations

The statutory development plan comprises:

- West Berkshire Core Strategy (2006-2026)
- West Berkshire Housing Site Allocation Development Plan Document (2006-2026)
- West Berkshire District Local Plan 1991-2006 (Saved Policies 2007)
- Replacement Minerals Local Plan for Berkshire
- Waste Local Plan for Berkshire (1998)

The policies from the West Berkshire Core Strategy (2006-2026) relevant to this application are:

- NPPF Policy
- Area Delivery Plan Policy 1: Spatial Strategy.
- CS 14: Design Principles
- CS 19: Historic Environment and Landscape Character

The West Berkshire Housing Site Allocations Development Plan Document (HSA DPD) was adopted on the 9th May 2017. The HSA DPD implements the framework set by the Core Strategy by allocating non-strategic housing sites across West Berkshire. It also allocates sites for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople, sets out residential parking standards and policies to guide housing development in the countryside. The policies relevant to this application are:

- P1: Residential Parking for New Development

Other material considerations for this application include:

- The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF December 2023)
- Planning Practice Guidance
- Supplementary Planning Document: Quality Design 2006
- Supplementary Planning Guidance 04/2: House Extensions

6. Considerations

Principle of the Development
Impact on the Character of the Area
Impact on Neighbouring Amenity

6.1. Principle of the Development

Policy ADPP1 of the Core Strategy states that development in West Berkshire will follow the existing settlement pattern. The application site is located within the Mortimer settlement boundary, where the principle in favour of development is established, subject to detailed policies on design, impact on the character of the area and neighbouring amenity which are discussed below.

6.2. Impact on the Character of the Area

The NPPF is clear that good design is indivisible from good planning; it attaches great importance to the design of the built environment. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, is indivisible from good planning, and should contribute positively to making places better for people. It emphasises the importance to plan positively for the achievement of high quality and inclusive design for all development, including individual buildings.

The NPPF also adds that the visual appearance and the architecture of individual buildings are very important factors, securing high quality and inclusive design goes beyond aesthetic considerations. Great weight should be given to outstanding or innovative designs which raise the standard of design more generally in the area. Permission should be refused for development of poor design that fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area and the way it functions.

Planning Policies CS14 and CS19 of the West Berkshire Core Strategy 2006 - 2026 are relevant in this instance. Policy CS14 states that new development must demonstrate high quality and sustainable design that respects and enhances the character and appearance of the area and makes a positive contribution to the quality of life in West Berkshire. It goes on to state that design and layout must be informed by the wider context, having regard not just to the immediate area, but to the wider locality. The criteria contained within these policies state that development shall contribute positively to local distinctiveness and sense of place. This is achieved by making efficient use of land whilst respecting the density, and character of the area.

Policy CS19 seeks to conserve and enhance the functional components of the landscape character and environment. This states that regard will be given to the sensitivity of the area to change, and to ensure that new development is appropriate in terms of location, scale and design in the context of the existing settlement form, pattern and character. Proposals for development should be informed by and respond to features identified in various settlement character studies including the Quality Design West Berkshire Supplementary Planning Document, and community documents which have been adopted by the council such as Parish Plans and Town Design Statements.

Of relevance, Paragraph 4 of the Supplementary Planning Guidance 04/2: House Extensions relates to Design and states that the basic shape and size of an extension should be subservient to the design of the original building. Having regard to side extensions, these should be sympathetically designed to appear subservient to the main house. A side extension could unbalance the appearance, especially if the house is one of a semi-detached pair. Paragraph 4 also states that it is usually recommended that the extension is set back from the main building by at least one metre, and only in some instances would it be appropriate to match the roof height of the extension to that of the existing property.

Following the demolition of the existing conservatory, the proposed single storey rear extension would extend 5m from the original rear wall, set slightly off the boundary with the adjoining dwelling to the east (no.65). The proposed would incorporate a flat roof, with brickwork walls and white uPVC frames to the windows to ensure visual assimilation with the existing dwelling. It is considered that the proposed would be proportionate and subordinate to the existing dwelling.

Having regard to the proposed first-floor extension, it is noted that amended plans were requested to set the first-floor side extension back from the front elevation and reduce the height to ensure it

remains subordinate to the existing dwelling, however the agent has rejected this request. The agent has sought to justify this stance by providing images of three similar examples in the area, arguing that a precedent has been set.

The first and closest example given is no.54 Stephen Firs, relating to a semi-detached dwelling located to the far western end of the road. While it is acknowledged that planning permission was granted in 2015 for a similar two-storey side extension under ref. 15/03025/HOUSE, it is noted that the approved extension incorporated the existing hipped roof form of the dwelling, which characterises each of the semi-detached dwellings located along the row to north of Stephen Firs. The proposed first-floor side extension to the current application would convert the existing hipped roof form to a gable, which is not a common feature of the street scene. However, it is conceded that there is a variety in the manner in which extensions have been constructed within the street scene, and that overall the proposed works will not appear overly intrusive in the setting. Therefore, on balance the proposed works are accepted.

Having regard to the pair of semi-detached dwellings located at no.9 and no.10 Stephens Close, these dwellings also do not have any built development near their side elevations, and appear balanced given the similarity in dimension of their two-storey side extensions. Moreover, these two examples are located a considerable distance from the site and so would not be considered representative of the immediate character of the site.

The proposed first-floor side extension to the current application would convert the existing hipped roof form to a gable, which is not a common feature of the street scene. However, it is conceded that there is a variety in the manner in which extensions have been constructed within the street scene, and that overall the proposed works will not appear overly intrusive in the setting, due to being of an acceptable quality of design and in keeping with the fascia design and appearance of the host dwelling. While generally at odds with the guidance of the SPG on house extensions it is not in this case considered that sufficient harm would result in terms of impact on the street scene to merit refusal on these grounds. Therefore, on balance, in terms of impact on character and appearance of the area and design the proposed works are accepted.

6.3. Impact on Neighbouring Amenity

Paragraph 4 of the Supplementary Planning Guidance 04/2: House Extensions relates to residential amenity and states when designing an extension the effect on living conditions of neighbours is a prime consideration. Good neighbourliness is an established principle of national planning and matters such as loss of light, outlook and noise are relevant.

It is considered that the first-floor side extension may cause some loss of light to the first-floor window to the eastern side elevation of the adjacent dwelling to the west (no.63), however given this window serves a hallway, an uninhabitable room, little weight can be attached to this. Moreover, given the flat roof and single storey nature of the single storey extension, it is not considered to have an unacceptable impact on the adjoining dwelling (no.65).

It is therefore considered that the proposal would not have a significant adverse impact on health or quality of life, having particular regard to residential amenity, given the site relates to a large rural plot. In reaching this view, regard has been had to relative positions of windows, separation distances, the orientation and height of buildings and boundary treatments.

7. Conclusion

Having taken account of all relevant policy considerations and the material considerations referred to above, it is considered that the proposed works would, on balance, not result in significant harm to the

street scene and character of the surrounding area, and are therefore deemed acceptable. The recommendation is approval.

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