

TWC/2015/0694

Halfway House, The Wrekin, Telford, Shropshire, TF6 5AL

Installation of new timber cladding, 4no. dormer windows, 4no. rooflights, 3no. windows, erection of detached car port and outbuilding to house vending machine (Part-Retrospective)

APPLICANT

Sean Seward

RECEIVED

30/07/2015

PARISH

Little Wenlock

WARD

Wrockwardine

OFFICER Martha Louise Fletcher

1.0 THE PROPOSAL

- 1.1 This application seeks full planning permission for residential alterations to The Halfway House, on The Wrekin. This includes the installation of new timber cladding to the first floor replacing the existing white painted brickwork; the installation of two large dormer extensions to the front elevation measuring a width of 3.57m, a length of 1.1m and a height of 2.38m located one above the other; and two large dormer extensions to the rear, again one over the other measuring a width of 3.57m, a length of 1.1m and a height of 2.38m. Four roof lights will also be installed, two to the front, one to the side and one to the rear. A new window will be installed on the ground floor rear elevation, and two replacements to the side elevation. These works have been carried out in full with the exception of the proposed car port.
- 1.2 A detached car port is also proposed this will be located to the North of the house the proposed car port is single storey of timber construction, with a shallow pitched tile roof totalling 3.7m high. These works have not been completed. A separate detached timber outbuilding measuring 1.3m x 1.1m, and up to 2.7m high will house a vending machine; this has been completed and currently installed under the canopy of a mature tree outside of the curtilage of the halfway house, on the access route past the halfway house, which leads to the summit of the Wrekin.
- 1.3 Along with a duly completed application form, the applicant has also supplied the Local Planning Authority with a Location Plan, Block Plan, Existing and Proposed Elevations and Floor Plans and structural calculations for the proposed roof conversion.
- 1.4 Planning Permission is required as the dwelling house is located on The Wrekin, which is listed as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). In such areas, permitted development rights are reduced and permission would be required for any extensions, any cladding of external walls and any addition or alteration of a roof.

2.0 SITE AND SURROUNDINGS

- 2.1 The Wrekin is a hill which lies to the East of Shropshire. It is located approximately five miles west of Telford and is on the border between Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin.
- 2.2 The hill reaches a height of 1,335ft above the Shropshire plain and is a prominent and well known landmark which hosts thousands of visitors per year.
- 2.3 The Halfway House is located on The Wrekin and is a traditional two-storey dwelling, which has been construed in traditional red brick, with large portions painted white. The roof is primarily gabled, with a circular hip projection to the north; which has been covered in plain tiles. There are four prominent pillars on the front elevation of the property which have also been painted white.
- 2.4 There are a large amount of mature trees on the site which provide screening and privacy for the dwelling and a double wooden gate lies at the front of the property.
- 2.5 The property itself is isolated from the main road at the foot of the Wrekin, located approximately halfway up the hill.

3.0 RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

- 3.1 None.

4.0 PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

- 4.1 National Planning Policy Framework
- 4.2 Wrekin Local Plan:
UD2 Design Criteria
OL2 Designated Areas
EH14 Land Stability
- 4.3 Core Strategy:
CS12 Natural Environment
CS15 Urban Design

5.0 SUMMARY OF CONSULTATION RESPONSES

- 5.1 Little Wenlock Parish Council – Comment:
Commented that it was disappointing that the works have been carried out retrospectively. Also stated that any development within the parish should reflect the wishes of the community.
- 5.2 Cllr Jacqueline Seymour – Support:
This application was green carded by Cllr Seymour on the following grounds:
The house has been an eyesore on The Wrekin for a long period of time and

any effort to get it restored back into occupation should be encouraged. The work which has been carried out so far has done nothing but enhance the building.

- 5.3 Arboricultural – Support Subject to Conditions:
If any Trees are to be removed, replacement planting will have to take place.
- 5.4 Ecology – Comment:
Encouraged that the following conditions and informatives should be placed on any approval – Erection of artificial nesting/rooting boxes, Lighting plan, Nesting Wild Birds informative, Bats informative, Storage of materials informative, Trenches and pipework informative and Disturbance of debris and rubble informative.
- 5.5 Shropshire Fire Service – No Comment
- 5.6 Natural England – Comment:
Confirmed that the dwelling does fall within a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) however, the proposal would not affect the setting of this. Asked the LPA to assess the proposal against the local landscape character, local and national biodiversity priority habitats and species and local biodiversity and geodiversity sites.

6.0 PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

6.1 Having regard to the development plan policy and other material considerations including comments received during the consultation process, the planning application raises the following main issues:

- The scale, design and siting of the proposal
- The impact on the setting of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
- The impact on the wider landscape setting
- Other matters

6.2 The scale, design and siting of the proposal

The National Planning Policy Framework Paragraphs 58, 61 and 64 relate to the requirement for good design promoting innovative and inclusive design which should address the connections between the built and historic environment. This also directs the local planning authority to refuse development of poor design that fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality. The Halfway House lies half way between the summit of The Wrekin and the adopted highway and is the only property on this hill. As such, the property is a feature property and will be visible to the thousands of visitors to The Wrekin each year, and as such whilst located in an isolated location from the main vehicular road, is highly visible and in close proximity to the large number of walkers that pass the structure each day. It is also viewed from the wider area to the rear elevation that is seen from the west, standing proud on the hill and piercing through the surrounding woodland.

- 6.3 As the proposal involves a number of additions it is therefore important to consider the various aspects of this proposal and assess whether the scale and design of them are acceptable in this sensitive location:
- 6.4 Installation of timber cladding
Although there are no other buildings within the vicinity that provide local distinctiveness, on assessment of this particular brick-built building; officers deem that the introduction of this type of timber cladding causes harm to the dwelling as existing. The dwelling is painted white, which fits with the grey backdrop of sky when viewed standing on the Wrekin hillside and thus reduces the prominence of the building. The proposed material will harden the building and fail to reinforce the soft approach the pallet of materials uses as existing. Furthermore the proposed cladding is of a design that is prominent with the wavy edge, and is not a sympathetic addition to the property, and consequently would cause significant harm to its character and setting of the building.
- 6.5 Installation of 4no. Dormer extensions
In considering the dormer extensions it is important to note that the windows as existing do not comply with building regulations and therefore as constructed would need amendments. Officers have not been provided with any information as to how this could be achieved, and therefore must continue to determine the dormer extensions on the basis of those submitted.
- 6.6 The dormer extensions individually are significantly large, falling wider and taller than the either the protruding gable apex or existing dormer windows that sit near to the dormers. The size of the window is also disproportionate to the size of the 'box' which house them, and as such become a dormer extension rather than a dormer window; with a specific purpose to provide additional useable floor area, and gain head height within each space; this is a need over and above the need for additional light to the roof area. Such dormer window extensions are resisted in the urban area, let alone on a property within this important and sensitive location within the Borough.
- 6.7 Furthermore they fail to respect and reinforce the design of the host dwelling and the existing dormer windows which are discrete and modest dormer windows measuring only 1.3m x 0.7m, and including a pitched roof. Officers believe that they are out of proportion on this quaint dwelling house; due to them being extremely wide in comparison to average dormer windows. Each dormer houses three large windows which are not of a similar scale or design to the windows on the original dwelling house.
- 6.8 The features of the existing dwelling house, such as windows, door and pillars are characterised by a vertical emphasis; these large dormer extensions add a feature to the dwelling house which adds a horizontal emphasis, and is compounded by the odd arrangement of a dormer over a dormer and as such, do not compliment or respect positively to the main dwelling house.
- 6.9 Furthermore as mentioned previously, the dormer extensions are constructed in unpainted and untreated timber cladding. This material has not previously

been used on this dwelling house, adding another material to the simple roof structure and as such provides a harsh extrinsic impact on the dwelling house and the wider landscape setting.

6.10 In respect of this aspect of the proposed development, it is considered that the dormer extensions scale, mass, design, materials, and location fail to respect and reinforce the character of the original dwelling house, which is further compounded by the number of extensions and as such are in conflict with both local and national planning policies, in particular policy UD6 of the Wrekin Local Plan.

6.11 Installation of 4no. roof lights, and 3no. windows

The roof lights and windows have already been installed on the property and as such, officers have been able to see the proposal in situ. The proposed roof lights and windows have been installed sparsely and are small in scale, and continue to respect the host dwelling. Accordingly Officers raise no concerns over this aspect of the proposal.

6.12 Erection of an outbuilding to house a vending machine

The principle of a vending machine within the curtilage of the dwellings is supported bearing in mind it will replace the closed facilities at this location. However the proposed vending machine has been installed in a timber structure abutting the footpath, and located outside of the boundary of the property, adjacent to the access gates.

6.13 Whilst officers note that the proposed outbuilding scale is not oversized to accommodate a vending machine, it is the design and location that raises concerns under a prominent tree. Furthermore it is at this location that public have littered the area, as there are no bins present at this location. Officers have requested that this is relocated in closer proximity to the dwelling or the original café, and thus reducing its prominence on the footpath. The addition of bins within the site for the purpose of rubbish disposal for these drinks should also be accommodated. The external treatment of the outbuilding should then be appropriate to suit that location.

6.14 Car Port

The proposed scale of the car port is reflective of 2 car lengths and width and is a single storey structure. The design of the car port is sympathetic to the main dwelling house and is proposed to be constructed in oak, and timber cladding with tiles to match the existing dwelling house. The proposed character reflects the rural surroundings subsequently officers consider the proposal would complement the existing dwelling house by way of appropriate materials, design and scale.

6.15 **The impact on the setting of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty**

When assessing this application, a critical element to assess is whether the proposal would have an adverse impact on the setting of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Policy OL2 of the Wrekin Local Plan, states that the council will not permit development which is likely to adversely affect,

either directly or indirectly, a site which is of national importance. This includes AONB's and SSSI's.

6.16 Given the issues raised in relation to the scale and design of the proposal, the cumulative development, and the sprawl of built form pushed out on to the footpath, it is considered that the proposal would have a significant detrimental impact on the setting of the AONB, as the proposed individual items as outlined above, are compounded by the resultant combination of those poor quality features, The tone of development therefore will have negative impact both on the setting of the AONB, in that it fails to bring forward a high quality development in such a prominent, and prestigious location and as such, the proposal fails to comply with this saved policy.

6.17 **The impact on the wider landscape setting**

Whilst officers accept that there are no immediate neighbours to the site, it is noted that the rear and side elevations of the dwelling house are visible from Little Wenlock and the main road into the village, due to the orientation, location and the clearance of the property to sit proud on the hillside. As such, officers must assess the impact that this proposal will have on the wider landscape setting.

6.18 As discussed above, officers consider that the scale and design of the proposal causes a significant detrimental impact on the individual property and as such, it is considered that the inadequate design and overbearing scale would be of a detrimental impact to the wider landscape setting, especially the landscape setting from Little Wenlock.

6.19 When the various aspects of this proposal are combined together, there is a mismatch of materials, scale and designs which provide an out of place and mis-matched proposal. Consequently the proposed elements visible from this clearing fail to address the wider topography and create a dominant feature within the AONB through inappropriate design and scale. Consequently the proposal is contrary to both local and national policies.

6.20 **Other Matters:**

Policy EH14 (Land Stability) requires applications to demonstrate that the proposals structural integrity shall not be compromised by slope stability and that the development can tolerate the ground condition; this is also supported by the NPPF which places the onus on developers as their responsibility to secure a safe development. Upon submission of this application officers asked the applicant for confirmation and evidence in relation to land stability that the erection of a detached car port was structurally sound on this site, given the location of the structure on a piece of land which descends dramatically to the east of the hill and toward the road. This information has not been forthcoming.

6.21 Furthermore no information has been submitted to the council to illustrate the level changes, before and existing, nor any details of retaining structures that may or may not be required in order to support the proposal. As such the application has not evidenced that the proposed development would not have

an adverse impact on ground stability. Additionally, in this case the issues around stability would have a significant impact not just on the site but also the side of the Wrekin in which this sits; and therefore there is a potential that the proposal could have an adverse impact on the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, the SSSI as environmental factors, but also the social and economic aspect taking account of the Wrekin's role within the Borough as a significant Tourism attraction. As such, the proposal is in conflict with policy EH14 of the Local Plan and guidance contained within the NPPF.

6.22 No information has been submitted with regard to arboriculture, however following a site visit from the Arboricultural Officer, no issues have been raised with regard to the impact on the trees; officers have questioned the impact of the proposed vending machine but as the structure contains no foundations, the proposed location will have limited impact on the tree that this adjacent to.

6.23 The proposed development has been assessed in relation to ecological impact, in particular taking account of the proposed location within the SSSI. Officers considered that the proposed development would have no detrimental impact on the ecology of the area, following comments received from the Council's Ecology officer and Natural England.

6.24 **Process**

It is important to note that officers have met with the applicant to consider the issues outlined above, but also to address the need for amendments which have risen through Building Regulations. Unfortunately such amendments have not been forthcoming, and the application remains as submitted and as constructed on site, this includes the location of the vending machine and its lack of refuse facilities.

7.0 **CONCLUSIONS**

7.1 In conclusion, the principle of modest development to support the residential accommodation and the facilities to support tourism at this location is endorsed by authority, the proposal in its current form is unacceptable and has failed to bring forward an appropriate design that respects and reinforces the character of the existing dwelling at prominent location within the borough; and in its current form would have a significant detrimental impact on the character and appearance of this individual property by way of inappropriate design, scale, mass, materials and siting of a number of elements. The introduction of timber cladding on the property would have a detrimental impact of the character, and would fail to respond positively to its context on the sky line. The proposed dormer extensions do not respect or create a positive solution to gain additional accommodation within the dwelling house. The proposed scale, mass and design is totally unacceptable, and this is compounded by the number and siting of the extensions one over the other and on both front and rear elevations, which are equally prominent. The proposed siting of the vending machine outhouse, reinforced by the design fails to integrate with the wider setting, pushing the built form of development into the AONB. Additionally, insufficient information has been provided in order for the Local Planning Authority to determine that the proposed car port

will not adversely affect the AONB in respect of the land stability.

8.0 RECOMMENDATION

- 8.1 Based on the conclusions above, the recommendation to the Planning Committee on this application is to **REFUSE PLANNING PERMISSION** for the following reasons:
1. The Local Planning Authority considers that the proposed alterations to the dwelling are unacceptable by virtue of the proposed scale, mass and design, including the proposed materials, which is further compounded by the siting and number of the dormer extensions. These alterations fail to respect, reinforce and respond positively to the host dwelling, to the detriment of the character and appearance of the dwelling, the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and the wider landscape. In addition the proposed location of the outbuilding in combination with the design fails to integrate with the setting and results in a sprawl of built development into the wider setting to the detriment of the AONB. Accordingly it is considered that the proposed development is in conflict with saved local plan policies UD2, OL2, Core strategy policies CS12, CS15, and guidance contained within the NPPF.
 2. The proposed car port will be located on the hillside of The Wrekin where the land descends dramatically towards the east. No information has been submitted to the Authority identifying the existing or proposed ground levels, nor does any supporting information accompany the application in relation to ground stability. Accordingly the Local Planning Authority considers that insufficient information has been provided to demonstrate that the proposed car port will not have an adverse impact on the ground stability of the site or of the wider site on this hillside of The Wrekin and its designation as an AONB and SSSI. Accordingly the proposal is contrary to policies EH14 and OL2 of the Wrekin Local Plan and guidance contained within the NPPF.