

Planning Committee: 01 December 2020

Item Number: 6

Application No: [W 20 / 0729](#)

Town/Parish Council: Leamington Spa
Case Officer: Emma Booker

Registration Date: 05/08/20
Expiry Date: 30/09/20

01926 456521 Emma.Booker@warwickdc.gov.uk

4 Risdale Close, Leamington Spa, CV32 6NN

Application of render to front and rear elevations of dwellinghouse FOR Mr M Griffin

This application is being presented to Planning Committee due to the number of support comments received from members of the public and it is recommended for refusal.

RECOMMENDATION

Planning Committee is recommended to refuse planning permission for the reason set out at the end of this report.

DETAILS OF THE DEVELOPMENT

The application seeks planning permission for the application of white-coloured render to the front and rear elevations of the dwellinghouse.

The proposal has been amended since the original submission of the application. As originally submitted, the applicant proposed to render all of the elevations of the property and affix vertical timber cladding at first floor level on the front elevation.

THE SITE AND ITS LOCATION

The application site is positioned on the east side of Risdale Close and benefits from frontage parking for two vehicles. The property has been extended at the rear at single storey level and has a modest rear garden.

The dwellings on Risdale Close are a mix of two house types. The larger dwellings at the northern and southern ends of the close are characterised by roofslopes of the main roof facing the road, a subordinate front gable feature, hanging tile and facing brickwork with grey/brown roof tiles. A degree of variation has been introduced to the design of these dwellings via the erection of a pitched roof over the integral garage at No.7.

The group of smaller dwellings, of which the subject dwelling forms a part of, comprise a large gable end with a flat roof projection at the front. Like the neighbours, these dwellings are characterised by hanging tile and facing brickwork, although some also feature within their principal elevations a small area of cladding between the first floor windows. At first floor level, the rear elevation of the subject property and its neighbours at nos. 1-3 are faced with a

brown-coloured pebble dash render. When observed from public vantage points, a degree of variation has been introduced to the design of this group of dwellings via the erection of modest front extensions and pitched roofs over the original front projection.

It is considered that character and appearance of the streetscene is strongly unified through dwellings of brick and tile construction with an element of hanging tiles as a feature. There is no render in the streetscene.

PLANNING HISTORY

No planning history for this site.

RELEVANT POLICIES

- National Planning Policy Framework
- Warwick District Local Plan 2011-2029
- BE1 - Layout and Design
- NE2 - Protecting Designated Biodiversity and Geodiversity Assets
- Guidance Documents
- Residential Design Guide (Supplementary Planning Document- May 2018)
- Royal Leamington Spa Neighbourhood Plan 2019-2029
Officer Note - While this is not yet formally made (as it has not yet been through a referendum) the above document has been through its final examination and as such is afforded substantial weight in the decision making process.
- RLS4 - Housing Character Outside the Conservation Areas

SUMMARY OF REPRESENTATIONS

Royal Leamington Spa Town Council: No objection.

WCC Ecology: Recommend that a pre-determinative bat survey is carried out.

Public Response:

1 objection received which supports the rendering of the property in principle, however, considers that the proposed render colour is ambiguous within the application; preference would be for a softer colour than bright white as this colour would make the rear wall particularly prominent compared with the existing natural stone-coloured pebble dash, which is considered to blend in with the surrounding properties.

11 support comments have been received on the following grounds:

- The renovations to the property are much needed; The brown tiles on the front of the house and the pebble dash on the rear appear dated. Residents should be encouraged to enhance the appearance of their houses, modernise them, make them more energy efficient etc.
- The proposal will not look out of place on Risdale Close and will improve the appearance of the road in general;

- Many people in the area have improved the external appearance of their houses and modernised the look of the property, examples can be found at Borrowdale Drive, Emmerdale Drive, Cockermouth Close, The Fairways and Beverley Road. Many of these houses are different to adjacent houses but do not look out of place, they look great and are a vast improvement.
- Someone has to be the first to alter the appearance of the dwelling, it is suggested that there will be many more to follow.
- The revised proposals are an improvement over the previous version as the brickwork on the side elevations will be retained, this will help the property to blend in better with surrounding houses while still modernising and updating the appearance of the house.

ASSESSMENT

Design and impact on character and appearance of the streetscene

The NPPF (2019) places an increased emphasis on the importance of achieving good quality design as a key aspect of sustainable development. Paragraph 127 states that planning decisions should ensure that developments function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development. It also states that decisions should ensure that developments are sympathetic to the local character, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change. Lastly, it is stated that development should maintain a strong sense of place by using building materials which create attractive, welcoming and distinctive places to live work and visit.

Local Plan Policy BE1 echoes paragraph 127 of the NPPF and states that new development will be permitted where it positively contributes to the character and quality of its environment through good layout and design. Proposals are expected to demonstrate that they harmonise with, or enhance, the existing settlement in terms of physical form, patterns of movement and land use. Proposals are expected to reinforce or enhance the established urban character of streets and reflect, respect and reinforce local architectural distinctiveness. Of particular relevance to this application, this policy also requires proposals to enhance and incorporate important existing features into the development by adopting appropriate materials and details.

Neighbourhood Plan Policy RLS4 relates to housing character outside of the Conservation Areas. In residential areas, the policy requires applicants to demonstrate how proposals have taken into account and responded to the predominant character (including local building styles and materials) in the street/road/locality within which the proposed development is situated.

The predominant and prevailing character of Risdale Close comprises dwellings which are uniform with regard to their external facing materials. The mixture of brick and hanging tiles is a consistent design feature and bright white render as proposed does not form part of the streetscene. As such it is considered that the

proposal to render the front elevation of the application property would appear at odds with the street scene.

Whilst it is acknowledged that the amendments to the application have reduced the extent of render proposed by retaining the brick side elevations, it is considered that the amendments do not go far enough to propose a design that would relate aesthetically to or harmonise with the uniform character of the street. Officers consider that an important feature of Risdale Close, which creates its distinctive character, is the contrast between the materials at first floor level and ground floor level within the principal elevation. It was recommended that the render be applied only to the first floor of the dwelling to reflect the current proportions of materials so that the dwellinghouse would harmonise with the prevailing character of the streetscene, however the applicant did not wish to amend the plans in accordance with this and instead submitted the amended plans.

11 support comments have been received from neighbours who have praised the design of the proposal and consider that it would lead to an improvement to both the dwelling and the street scene. The neighbours feel that the proposal would not look out of place and instead consider that it would lead to an improvement to the general appearance of the road. Officers acknowledge that the dwelling is currently in need of repair and maintenance as a result of being vacant for some time. The proposals would present a means by which repairs could be carried out, however, this is not considered adequate justification for approving a scheme which fails to appear sympathetic to the character of the streetscene and does not maintain the architectural distinctiveness of the cul-de-sac. It is also acknowledged that the proposals could improve the thermal efficiency of the dwelling, however, no evidence has been submitted as part of the application to demonstrate that this may be the case. It is considered that there are alternative and more appropriate ways in which the appearance of the dwelling could be improved whilst complying with the objectives of the NPPF and policies BE1 and RSL4.

Those in support of the proposal have drawn attention to the fact that homeowners in the local area have altered the external appearance of their homes through modernisation which has resulted in these houses appearing different to their neighbours. It is considered that in these cases the houses do not look out of place and are a vast improvement. Specifically, a neighbour has drawn attention to alterations undertaken in Borrowdale Drive, Emmerdale Drive, Cockermouth Close, The Fairways and Beverley Road.

11 and 15 Borrowdale Drive have recently applied render and timber cladding to the principal elevation of the dwellinghouse at first floor level, importantly the original facing brickwork compromised within the side elevations and at ground floor level on the principal have been retained. The balance of the render, cladding and brickwork materials is considered to adequately maintain the character of the street scene as the proportions of the existing facing materials reflects those of the original hanging tile and brickwork. The result are dwellinghouses which do not appear overly prominent as they continue to relate to the design and appearance of the neighbours by virtue of the fact that both

schemes retain the original brickwork which gives this streetscene its distinctive character. As highlighted by a neighbour, neither of these properties are visible from the application site so do not form a part of the Risdale Close streetscene. Therefore, the character and appearance of these dwellings should be afforded limited weight in the determination of the current planning application.

Ennerdale Close and Cockermouth Close are located at the rear of the application site in the easterly direction. 3 and 4 Ennerdale Close have altered their principal elevations through the application of render at first floor level. Importantly neither of these properties are have rendered the entirety of the principal elevation and instead have retained the original facing brickwork at ground floor or have introduced an alternative material in order to reflect the original design of the principal elevation. Therefore, the design and appearance of 3 and 4 Ennerdale Close are appropriate and sympathetic to the streetscene and successfully integrate with their surroundings.

The same conclusion cannot be made for the proposal at 4 Risdale Close which fails to retain the important architectural features of the principal elevation which enable it to harmonise with its neighbours. It is not clear to Officers which dwellings in Cockermouth Close the neighbours refer to, this street and Ennerdale Close are further away from the application site than those located on Borrowdale Drive. The streetscenes of The Fairways and Beverley Road are distinctively different in character and located a significant distance from the application and are therefore not considered relevant to the assessment of the proposal. None of the properties within these streets contribute to the character of the Risdale Close streetscene, thus the character and appearance of dwellings within these streets should also be afforded appropriate limited weight in the determination of the current planning application.

The applicant has submitted a supporting statement which references a number of additional properties within the local area which have also been altered via the application of render; 1 Astley Close and 8 Cockermouth Close. For the same reasons previously discussed, the character and appearance of these dwellings needs to be afforded limited weight when considering the acceptability of the application of render to the entirety of the principle and rear elevation at 4 Risdale Close.

It is often the case that it is possible to find an example of similar development within the local area but it is important to stress that each case must be assessed on its own merits because the circumstances of each case are rarely the same. Within this area of Leamington Spa, the roads have their own distinctive character which the NPPF and policy BE1 seek to protect. In this particular case the uniform character of the Risdale Close streetscene is considered to be unique and would be negatively impacted by the proposed development, it is for this reason that the application of render to the entirety of the principle and rear elevation should be resisted.

With regard to the NPPF, Policy BE1 of the Local Plan and Policy RSL4 of the Neighbourhood Plan, Officers consider that the proposal would introduce a jarring feature at odds with the streetscene strongly defined by dwellings of

brick and tile construction. The proposal would result in an alien and incongruous feature which would harm the character and appearance of the streetscene and would be contrary to the policies listed.

Ecology

Local Plan Policy NE2 seeks to protect species of national and local importance for biodiversity and geodiversity. The policy stipulates that development will not be permitted that will destroy or adversely affect protected species.

Site photos were sent to the ecologist at Warwickshire County Council. They have commented that their main concern with the development would be for bat potential within hanging tiles. It is evident from the photos that a number of the tiles on the principle elevation of the property are raised, which could provide opportunities for crevice dwelling species. In this instance, given the extent of the alterations proposed and due to the fact that appropriate implementation could be implemented at the site, the ecologist has recommended that a condition be attached to any approval granted for an initial bat survey to be carried out prior to the works. They have advised that the initial survey is likely to utilise endoscope inspections and would help determine if any further survey work, such as activity surveys, would be required. These findings would then inform appropriate mitigation.

The above comments and recommendations from the ecologist have been received at the later stages of the application and the applicant has therefore not had reasonable opportunity to carry out an initial bat survey. The applicant has advised that the hanging tiles have already been removed in anticipation of the determination of the application. The removal of the tiles does not amount to development and falls outside of the control of the planning system. Nevertheless, the applicant is bound by legislation relating to protected species. Officers do not consider that it would be reasonable to add the condition as recommended and that it would be more appropriate, in the event of an approval, to add a bat note advising the applicant of their duty in respect to protected species.

REFUSAL REASONS

- 1 The NPPF (2019) places an increased emphasis on the importance of achieving good quality design as a key aspect of sustainable development. Paragraph 127 states that planning decisions should ensure that developments function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development. It also states that decisions should ensure that developments are sympathetic to the local character, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change. Lastly, it is stated that development should maintain a strong sense of place by using building materials which create attractive, welcoming and distinctive places to live work and visit.

Local Plan Policy BE1 echoes paragraph 127 of the NPPF and states that new development will be permitted where it positively contributes to the

character and quality of its environment through good layout and design. Proposals are expected to harmonise with, or enhance, the existing settlement in terms of physical form, patterns of movement and land use, and to reinforce or enhance the established urban character of streets. In addition, proposals should reflect, respect and reinforce local architectural distinctiveness through the incorporation of important existing features into the development by adopting appropriate materials and details.

Neighbourhood Plan policy RLS4 relates to housing character outside of the conservation area. In residential areas, the policy requires applicants to demonstrate how proposals have taken into account and responded to the predominant character (including local building styles and materials) in the street/road/locality within which the proposed development is situated.

The predominant and prevailing character of Risdale Close comprises dwellings which are uniform in design with regard to their external facing materials. The mixture of brick and hanging tiles is a consistent design feature and bright-white render does not currently make a contribution to the material palette within this street.

In the opinion of the Local Planning Authority the proposal would appear in stark contrast as an alien and incongruous feature in the context of the uniform use of brick and tile construction and would result in harm to the character and appearance of the streetscene. The excessive extent of render proposed would cause the dwelling to appear overly prominent within the street scene, thus it is considered that the development would have a negative impact on the character of the streetscene.

The development is thereby considered to be contrary to the aforementioned policies.
