

2 BROOK LANE – AMENDMENT NO.1

Complete refurbishment and reconfiguration of existing house, demolition of existing store room building and conservatory. Erection of two storey rear extension. (As amended by plans received 2 October 2023 omitting first floor side extension, altering fenestration serving bedrooms 2 and 3 and changing proposed light coloured timber cladding).

1. Officer Recommendation:**OBJECTS:**

- The proposal fails to take account of local character, contrary to LP 2035 Policy DES2 and TNP Policy ESDQ16.
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2. Key Issues:

This application was discussed at Thame's Planning and Environment Committee on 19th September 2023. The Town Council objected to the proposal on the following grounds:

- In failing to respect the amenity and privacy of neighbours the proposal is contrary to Local Plan 2035 Policy DES6 and Thame Neighbourhood Plan Policy ESDQ16.
- The proposal does not heed the South Oxfordshire Design Guide in considering design and materials, and neighbouring amenity.
- The proposal fails to take account of local character, contrary to LP 2035 Policy DES2 and TNP Policies ESDQ16 and ESDQ17.

The applicant has informed us that following discussions with the case officer they amended their original proposal. The applicant met with Councillors and officers of the Town Council on 9th October 2023 to discuss the proposed amendments.

- Impact on Neighbouring / Internal Amenity

The removal of the proposed first floor extension over the existing garage means that harm to the amenity of 4 Spring Path's patio area is no longer a concern.

The window to Bedroom 2 is large (2.4m wide by 1.25m high) and would be relatively close to the rear, principal elevations of numbers 9 (@18.5m) and 11 (19.4m) Mitchell Close with their private patio areas 2 – 3 metres closer. Although technically within a side elevation, the window serves a habitable room and is similar in area to those expected on a principal elevation. The distance to the rear of the houses behind is much greater than the minimum distance required by the SODC Design Guidance for a back to side relationship. There is, however, no standard for window sizes within the guidance. It is advised that an objection on this ground may not be capable of being upheld.

The window to Bedroom 3 was raised in height but would have directly overlooked the gable wall of 4 Spring Path. This would be contrary to the South Oxfordshire District Council Joint Design Guide (JDG), which requires a 10 metre distance between a habitable window and a side elevation. This window has now been raised to above natural eye line

and rooflights introduced to ensure adequate illumination of this room. While this room will not have an outlook the room is of a good size and the raised ceilings and additional glazing should ensure an adequate level of amenity for the occupant.

- Impact on the Character and Appearance of the Area

The sizeable extension would be built on a different alignment to the neighbouring property. The gap between the buildings will, therefore, visibly narrow to leave only a small gap between numbers 2 Brook Lane and 4 Spring Path, around 2.8 metres at its closest point. The combination of massing and material finish would be out of character with the neighbouring properties. This is contrary to Local Plan Policy DES2 and Thame Neighbourhood Plan (TNP) Policy ESDQ16. This was discussed during the Town Council's pre-application meeting with the applicant (please see Design section, below).

- Design

The applicant has informed the Town Council that while they are continuing to propose that both the existing house and its extension be clad in timber, they have moved to a natural timber finish (rather than painted black) following a discussion with a neighbour.

Once built, there would be no means of understanding the relationship between the original property and its extension as the two are similarly sized and treated in appearance. This is contrary to SODC's design guidance. The close repeating of a second gable end and ridge would introduce a new built form into the area.

The applicant explained that the extension was deep to enable the roof pitch for the extension to be mirrored with that of the original dwelling. The applicant noted that the resulting mirrored form is a deliberate design choice that they believed would be aesthetically more pleasing than a traditional step-down / back extension.

The loss of the original character of the existing building and its fenestration is thought by the applicant to be reasonable as the existing building, while sharing similar materials to its neighbours, is of a design that is unique in the street scene. The extension and proposed cladding would introduce a new unique design that is believed appropriate in its context.

- Discussion

The explanations for the choice of materials and design approach are considered reasonable and it is recognised that the existing property's form is unique in the immediate environment. Members will note that the massing / alignment matter discussed in the Impact section of this report has not been addressed and for this reason it is recommended that the Town Council continue to object on this ground.

Should Members wish to approve this amended scheme it is recommended that a comment is added, noting that the property's unique existing built form allows for deviation from the adopted Design Guidance for household extensions.

3. Planning History:

[P84/N0014](#) – Single storey extension.
SODC granted planning permission

[P79/N0087](#) – Erection of a garage and covered passageway.
SODC granted planning permission

4. Risk Appraisal

Dependent on the Town Council's recommendation to SODC is it likely that there would be a contrary decision by SODC? If so then a councillor should be nominated at the meeting to represent the views of the Town Council at the planning committee.

5. Policies Relevant to the Application

The following policies are of particular relevance when considering this application.

Thame Neighbourhood Plan

H6	Design new development to be of high quality
GA6	New development to provide parking on site for occupants and visitors
ESDQ15	Developers must demonstrate in a Design and Access Statement how their proposed development reinforces Thame's character
ESDQ16	Development must relate well to its site and its surroundings
ESDQ17	Development must make a positive contribution towards the distinctive character of the town as a whole
ESDQ18	New development must contribute to local character by creating a sense of place appropriate to its location
ESDQ19	The Design and Access Statement and accompanying drawings must provide sufficient detail for proposals to be properly understood
ESDQ27	Design in the 'forgotten' elements from the start of the design process
ESDQ28	Provide good quality private outdoor space
ESDQ29	Design car parking so that it fits in with the character of the proposed development

SODC Local Plan 2035 Policies

DES1	Delivering high quality development
DES3	Design and access statements
DES5	Outdoor amenity space
DES6	Residential amenity
DES7	Efficient use of resources
DES8	Promoting sustainable design
H20	Extensions to dwellings
TRANS5	Consideration of development proposals