

JPPC ref: DB/
Portal ref:

Planning Services
Cherwell District Council

SUBMITTED VIA E-MAIL

21 February 2023

Dear Sir or Madam,

Application for planning permission for formation of swimming pool and associated works at Cedar Lodge, Steeple Aston

Please find enclosed a householder planning application seeking permission for the formation of a swimming pool in the garden of Cedar Lodge, Steeple Aston. The proposed swimming pool is part of a larger scheme of works to improve the home, including the renovation of outbuildings. However, as the formation of the swimming pool does not require listed building consent this is made as a separate application is to allow a timely start to work.

Site and surroundings

This application proposes the formation of an in-ground, open-air swimming pool in the garden of Cedar Lodge for the enjoyment of the household.

Cedar Lodge is a substantial private dwelling located to the south of North Side in Steeple Aston. The property features a large house with a range of outbuildings, principally to its west, and mature landscaped gardens to the south.

The topography of the area is sloping with homes on North Side set to the upper part of a valley which slopes to the south. The gradient is such that Cedar Lodge is set above its gardens. The property is neighboured to the east and west by dwellings. The road North Side passes to the north with houses and gardens across the valley to the south. A public footpath passes along the valley bottom.

Cedar Lodge is a Grade II listed building having first been added to the statutory list in 1988. A full copy of the listing description is provided in the accompanying Heritage Impact Assessment by Worledge Associates. The property is also located in the Steeple Aston Conservation Area. The site is not in a protected landscape or designated green belt.

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The area is not shown to be at risk of flooding according to the Environment Agency's online Flood Map for Planning. Steeple Aston falls within the plan area of the Mid Cherwell Neighbourhood Plan (MCNP), its policies are therefore relevant to this application.

Proposal

The proposal is to form an open-air swimming pool with terrace for the household of Cedar Lodge within its private garden. The simple pool and terrace are designed to respect the character of the dwelling and blend with the established gardens.

Discussion

Principle of development

This application seeks to provide facilities for the enjoyment of the household of Cedar Lodge within its private garden. It is a universally accepted principle that householders should be allowed to improve their homes unless it gives rise to harmful impacts to amenity.

The principle of these proposals is supported, the outcome of this application falls to be considered upon the impact of the proposal.

Policy ESD13 of the Cherwell Local Plan 2031 Part 1 (CLP2031) requires developments to be sensitive to their local landscape while CLP2031 policy ESD15 seeks to protect the character of the built and historic environment. Saved policies of the Cherwell Local Plan 1996 (CLP1996) are also relevant insofar as they are consistent with the NPPF. Policies C28 and C30 are of relevance to this proposal as they require high quality layout and design of developments including improvements to dwellings.

The Mid Cherwell Neighbourhood Plan does not include any detailed policy on householder developments. The Plan does identify a settlement boundary which is adjacent to the area of the proposed swimming pool, however this is principally for the purpose of identifying where new dwellings will be permitted. It is useful to note that the MCNP acknowledges that residential gardens, including that at Cedar Lodge, are outside the settlement boundary. It does not therefore denote the division between the developed village and open countryside. The plan also seeks to protect important views in the area, the proposed development does not intrude on any views identified in the MCNP or its associated documents.

Heritage impact

The designation of Cedar Lodge as a grade II listed building means it is a heritage asset of importance. The NPPF requires that applications include an assessment of heritage impacts commensurate with the importance of the asset; accordingly this application includes a Heritage Impact Assessment undertaken by Worledge Associates. The assessment concludes:

"It is considered this modest proposal to install an in-ground swimming pool in a physically and visually removed part of the garden of Cedar Lodge, which evidence suggests was not part of a formal or designed landscape, will have no impact on the identified heritage significance of Cedar Lodge, nor impact on the special character of the Steeple Aston Conservation Area".

Consequently, the proposal meets the requirements of the Local Plan and NPPF to maintain the special character of heritage assets, it is therefore supported by Local Plan policy ESD15.

Visual impact

As noted in the Heritage Impact Assessment, the location of the proposed swimming pool is visually discrete being screened from North Side by buildings which line the road, and from the footpath to the south by mature vegetation. The nature of the development also means there is limited chances for a visual impact, all development is at or below ground level. Consequently, the development will not have a notable visual impact on the character of the area.

Notwithstanding, if seen the swimming pool would be in the well established gardens of Cedar Lodge. The development would be in character with the developed appearance of the land and the status of the dwelling it serves, and so would not be incongruous or detrimental to the character and appearance of the area.

Impact on neighbours

The development does not involve any new building or structure which might overshadow or overlook neighbours. The proposed swimming pool is located in a private garden where the noise associated with a household at leisure is anticipated, it should not therefore introduce any alien or intrusive impacts that would be harmful to the amenity of neighbours.

Other impacts

The small scale of the proposed development means there is limited scope for other impacts. This application includes a preliminary ecological appraisal which explains how development can be undertaken without harm to important species or habitats.

The position of the proposed pool avoids works in the vicinity of mature trees, additional vegetation is proposed as part of the landscaping scheme which accompanies the proposals.

The development is not of a type which will increase traffic associated with the property or impact upon demand for parking.

The proposal is considered to provide a scheme of high-quality design which contributes to its surroundings and local distinctiveness as required under CLP2031 policies ESD13, ESD15, and saved policies C28 and C30 of the CLP1996.

Conclusion

This application seeks planning permission for a modest open air swimming pool in the garden of Cedar Lodge for the enjoyment of the household.

The proposal does not therefore give rise to any notable impacts beyond the site with regard to traffic, noise, or other activity. The development should not impact upon local amenity.

The siting is discrete in order that the pool should not be broadly seen. If works are observed, they maintain the character of the mature gardens to the listed dwellinghouse. The proposal maintains the character, appearance, and interest of the building, and the special interest of designated heritage assets, as required by the Local Plan and NPPF.

We cannot identify any harm from the development which would merit a refusal of planning permission when considered in the context of the existing site and buildings.

This proposal accords with relevant development plan policies, including ESD13, ESD15, C28, and C30. In view of compliance with the Local Plan, and in the absence of planning harm, the presumption in favour of sustainable development as expressed at paragraph 11 of the NPPF sets out that planning permission should be granted.

We look forward to receiving the application acknowledgement shortly and trust that the allocated case officer will be in contact in due course should there be any queries regarding the proposal.

Yours faithfully,



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