

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 7 November 2016

by M Brookes BA MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government

Decision date: 16 November 2016

Appeal Ref: APP/X0415/D/16/3158849

32 Woodside Avenue, Chesham Bois, Amersham, Buckinghamshire, HP6 6BQ

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mr & Mrs Buckingham against the decision of Chiltern District Council.
 - The application, Ref. CH/2016/1004/FA, dated 25 May 2016, was refused by notice dated 11 July 2016.
 - The development proposed is a two storey front extension.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the extension on the character and appearance of the appeal property and surrounding area.

Reasons

3. Development in Woodside Avenue to the east of its junction with Milton Lawns predominantly comprises pairs of semi-detached, two storey houses. The houses are all set well back from the road, but there is no uniform building line. The original buildings are of a variety of designs and there have been extensions to many of the properties, but they generally retain a substantial degree of symmetry particularly at first floor level and above.
 4. The symmetry of the pairs of houses is most striking in those properties with forward projecting wings reinforced by bay windows at ground and first floor level. However, the symmetry that exists in most of the front elevations is a distinctive feature that makes an important contribution to the character and appearance of the area surrounding the appeal property.
 5. The appeal property itself is one of four pairs of houses on the south side of the road that were designed with symmetrical but, with the exception of ground floor bays, largely flat front façades. Two of the houses, at 36 and 39 Woodside Avenue, have two storey front extensions that significantly disrupt the symmetry of two of these four pairs of houses. The other two pairs largely retain their original symmetry and although the appeal property has an extended bay window it otherwise largely balances the façade of the adjacent house in its form and details of design, notably at first floor level and above.
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6. Relevant development plan policies include Policy CS20 of the Core Strategy for Chiltern District (2011) (CS) and saved Policy GC1 of the Chiltern District Local Plan (1997 as altered and consolidated in 2001, 2007 and 2011) (LP), which seek a high standard of design. This is in line with one of the core principles in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) that planning should always seek to secure high quality design.
7. LP Policy H15 includes the provision that an extension should be designed to respect the scale and proportions of the existing dwelling and reflect its form and design details. The siting of an extension should also relate well to both the existing dwelling and the street scene and should not be obtrusive.
8. Detailed guidance is contained in the Council's Residential Extensions and Householder Development Supplementary Planning Document (2013) (SPD). This includes guidance that any extension should harmonise with a building, striking a balanced visual relationship with its existing features and integrating in such a way that it does not adversely affect the character and appearance of the locality.
9. The proposal is to construct a two storey extension to the front of the property. It would not materially reduce the set-back of the building in the road or appear obtrusive in the street scene. It would also be of similar form and somewhat smaller than the extensions at 36 and 39 Woodside Avenue. However, it would be a substantial addition to the front of the property that would cause significant imbalance and loss of symmetry to the pair of houses, particularly at first floor and roof levels, to the detriment of their character and appearance.
10. The extension would not be sited to relate well to the existing dwelling in accordance with LP Policy H15 and would not harmonise with a building, striking a balanced visual relationship with its existing features in accordance with guidance in the SPD. In these respects it would not represent a high standard of design in accordance with CS Policy CS20, LP Policy GC1 and the NPPF.
11. Although not on one of the more distinctive pairs of houses in the road the extension would be a prominent and discordant feature in the street scene and the loss of symmetry and of the largely flat façade of the existing building would have an unacceptably harmful effect on the character and appearance of the surrounding area. That harm is not materially mitigated or justified by the extensions at 36 and 39 Woodside Avenue, which are uncharacteristic of the area generally.

Other Matters

12. The extension would provide useful additional accommodation and I have noted that the proposal has been designed to meet the appellants' needs within the constraints of the existing property. I have also noted support from local residents for the proposal. However, those benefits, difficulties and letters of support do not outweigh or justify the harm that the development would cause.

Conclusion

13. The proposed extension would have an unacceptably harmful effect on the character and appearance of the appeal property and surrounding area and would conflict with the development plan when read as a whole. For that reason and having regard to all other matters raised, the appeal is dismissed.

M Brookes

INSPECTOR