
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 14 November 2016

by Jonathan Manning BSc (Hons) MA MRTPI

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

Decision date: 22 November 2016

Appeal Ref: APP/X0360/D/16/3158181

38 Palmerstone Road, Earley, Reading, RG6 1HL

- 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 Dr Matthew Reynolds against the decision of Wokingham Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 161372, dated 12 May 2016, was refused by notice dated 8 July 2016.
 - The development proposed is first floor side and rear extension plus conversion of loft space to habitable accommodation with a rear dormer window.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue of the appeal is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the host dwelling and the area.

Reasons

3. The appeal site is located on Palmerstone Road and accommodates a two storey, three bedroom semi-detached property. The wider area is largely residential and I observed that there is a variety of dwelling types and architectural styles in the area. It was evident from my visit that many properties in Palmerstone Road have been subject to alterations and extensions.
 4. The proposal seeks to provide a first floor side and rear extension and would also convert the loft into habitable living space, which would incorporate a rear dormer window. The Wokingham Borough Council Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (2012) (the Design Guide SPD) advises on design matters and sets out that its purpose is to enhance the design of development and make sure that proposals are of the highest quality design. There is no reason before me to afford anything other than significant weight to guidance set out within the Design Guide SPD. Section 4.11 of the Design Guide SPD identifies that extensions '*should be clearly subservient to the form and scale of the original buildings, in most circumstances unless where it is more appropriate to design a seamless continuation*'. Further, Figure 4.37 states that '*Side extensions should be set back from the building line by at least 1m, preferably with a lower roofline and should be set at least 1m from the plot boundary*'.
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5. The proposed first floor side extension would not be set back from the front building line by 1 metre. I acknowledge the appellant's view that it would be set back some 0.7 metres behind the ground floor office and bay window that forms the majority of the front ground floor elevation. However, this would still not meet the guidance set out within the Design Guide SPD. In any event, the side extension would sit flush with the existing front elevation at first floor level, which is where, in my view, a set back would be necessary to ensure that it would appear subservient. Further to this the roofline would be continued from its existing ridge height, which is also contrary to the Design Guide SPD. Whilst noting that the width of the extension would be smaller in width than the existing dwelling, I agree with the Council that the proposed first floor extension would not appear subservient and would be contrary to the guidance provided in the Design Guide SPD. The proposal would add noticeable bulk and mass to the host dwelling, which would appear excessive and the resulting dwelling would be overly prominent when viewed from the street scene, causing harm to the character and appearance of the host dwelling and the area.
6. No 40, the adjoining semi-detached property is extended to the side at first floor level. However, this is set back and has a lower roofline than the main dwelling. Whilst the dwellings are not perfectly symmetrical in their current form, I consider that the significant additional bulk to the appeal dwelling at first floor level would unacceptably unbalance the pair of semi-detached properties, resulting in further harm.
7. The appellant is of the view for a number of reasons that the existing properties surrounding the appeal site would reduce the visibility of the proposed first floor side extension within the street scene. Whilst this may be the case, I observed that the appeal property is clearly visible when in close proximity to the appeal site. Further, I am not of the view that the appeal dwelling being set back 2 metres further from the road than its neighbouring properties and having a lower roofline than many other semi-detached homes in the area is sufficient to mitigate the excessive additional bulk and lack of subservience. In addition, I am not of the view that the use of different materials or the addition of the proposed small pitched roof would suitably give the impression of any meaningful subservience to the main dwelling.
8. I acknowledge that there are some examples where extensions have been added which have a seamless continuation of the building line and roofline, such as that at No 34. However, these would have been added some time ago and certainly before the Design Guide SPD was adopted by the Council. Having regard to the appellant's analysis of existing similar two-storey side extended semi-detached homes, I noted on my visit that whilst there is variation, most extensions in the immediate area, do have some form of subservience to the main dwelling house, which would not be the case here. Therefore, I am not of the view that that the existing dwellings in the area set any precedent for the proposal or provide justification for the design to be a seamless continuation of the main dwelling.
9. In conclusion, the proposed first floor side extension, by virtue of its additional excessive bulk and lack of subservience would cause harm to the character and appearance of the host dwelling, the pair of semi-detached properties and the area. The proposal therefore runs contrary to Policy CP3 of the Wokingham Borough Local Development Framework Core Strategy (2010). The policy

seeks to ensure that development is appropriate in terms of scale, mass, built form, height, materials and character of the area, together with being of high quality design. The proposal also conflicts with the guidance provided by the Design Guide SPD. I also consider that the proposal runs contrary to Section 7 of the National Planning Policy Framework, which seeks to deliver good design.

Other matters

10. I acknowledge the practical benefits of the proposed design to the appellant, in terms of maximising space, layout and build costs. I also accept that there were no objections to the scheme from the occupants of the properties opposite the appeal site. Further, I note the appellant's preferences in terms of architectural style. However, these matters individually or in combination are not sufficient to outweigh the identified harm.
11. An interested party has raised several other concerns. However, as I am dismissing the appeal on other grounds, such matters do not alter my overall conclusion and have therefore not had a significant bearing on my decision.

Conclusion

12. For the reasons set out above and having regard to all other matters raised, there are no material considerations that outweigh the identified harm and associated development plan conflict, the appeal is therefore dismissed.

Jonathan Manning

INSPECTOR