

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 7 March 2017

by H Lock BA(Hons) DipTP MRTPI

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

Decision date: 4th April 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/Q0505/D/16/3165314

4 Natal Road, CAMBRIDGE, CB1 3NS

- 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 Jon Holgate against the decision of Cambridge City Council.
 - The application Ref. 16/1595/FUL was refused by notice dated 2 November 2016.
 - The development proposed is single storey rear extension and rear roof extension (including raising ridge height).
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed insofar as it relates to rear roof extension (including raising ridge height). The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted insofar as it relates to single storey rear extension at 4 Natal Road, CAMBRIDGE, CB1 3NS in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref. 16/1595/FUL, and subject to the following conditions:
 - 1) The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than three years from the date of this decision.
 - 2) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans so far as relevant to that part of the development hereby permitted: 6862/1; 6862 Revised 19/08/16.
 - 3) The materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of the development hereby permitted shall match those used in the existing building.

Procedural Matter

2. The Council issued a decision notice which approved the single storey extension and refused permission for the roof extension, and the appeal form stated that the appeal specifically relates to the rear roof extension and ridge height, noting that the single storey rear extension had been given outline approval. However, although the Secretary of State in considering planning appeals has the option to issue a split decision (i.e. to allow part and dismiss part), the same statutory powers do not exist for local planning authorities.
 3. Following correspondence with the appellant, this appeal has therefore considered both parts of the development that were originally applied for, including the single storey rear extension.
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Main Issue

4. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the appeal property, the terrace of which it forms part and the wider street scene.

Reasons

5. The appeal property is central within a terrace of three houses at the junction of Natal Road with Montreal Road. This is a residential area outside of the Mill Lane Conservation Area, and comprises buildings in a variety of styles. It is evident from the differences in design, materials and detailing of the dwellings in this terrace that they were not constructed as one, and therefore the terrace does not exhibit a uniform appearance. However, the roof ridge line of the three dwellings is aligned.
6. The siting of the terrace at the road junction means that it has a degree of prominence in the street scene¹, with clear views of the front elevation of the group from Natal Road and Montreal Road, and the rear of the properties is highly visible in views from Montreal Road. The rear of the three properties is not uniform, with rear projections which vary in size and design, but the roofscape is largely unaltered. Further along Natal Road and in Montreal Road there are examples of large rear roof additions, but this form of development is not prevalent in the area.
7. Policy 3/14 of the Cambridge City Local Plan 2006 (LP) supports extensions which, amongst other criteria, reflect or successfully contrast with the form and architectural detailing of the existing building, and this is supported by guidance in the Council's 'Roof Extensions Design Guide' 2003 (REDG), which advises that roof extensions must be appropriate in size, scale and proportion to the existing house and adjoining properties and must not be so large as to over dominate the existing roof or to overwhelm their immediate setting. It notes that roof extensions which raise the height of the ridge will normally be resisted unless the street already lacks uniform roof heights or the ridge of the roof is not visible from the street.
8. Although roof ridge heights in the vicinity are not uniform, the proposed increase in ridge height on this central terraced house would be create an awkward transition that would detract from the group. Whilst I acknowledge that the site is not within a conservation area, it is appropriate to seek high quality design in all locations. I share the Council's view that the dwelling and the terrace are prominently sited, and that the proposed roof alterations would be highly visible in the streetscene.
9. The roof extension would occupy most of the rear roof slope and would extend over the existing two-storey outrigger. The scale, bulk and flat-roofed form of the proposal would appear incongruous and unacceptably dominant on the original building and the roof of the terraced group. It would neither reflect nor successfully contrast with the form and architectural detailing of the existing building, and indeed the appellant accepts that the proposal would not be in the style of the original property.
10. I note that there are examples of similar developments in the vicinity of the site, as identified by the appellant. However, with the exception of the

¹ In the sense of being noticeable, as opposed to its quality in relation to the Mill Lane Conservation Area.

development at 394-398 Mill Road/8 Montreal Road, no information has been provided of planning permissions granted for any of these examples, or the circumstances of their construction. On the basis of the information provided it is unclear whether or not express permission was required or if the buildings have been extended through the exercise of Permitted Development rights². As such, I cannot gauge any inconsistency in decision-making, as suggested by the appellant. Assessing this proposal on its own merits, I find that its ungainly form would appear awkward and uncoordinated on the property and the terrace, and would detract from their character and appearance, and the wider streetscene.

11. Whilst I have had regard to these other extensions, the REDG notes that "proposals for roof extensions which perpetuate forms of existing, but poorly designed roof extensions in particular, insensitively designed large 'box type' roof extensions which show little respect for the existing roofline or for the scale, design and proportions of the existing property and its neighbours – are extremely unlikely to be acceptable".
12. I therefore conclude that the proposed rear roof extension and raised ridge height would be detrimental to the character and appearance of the appeal property, the terrace of which it forms part and the wider street scene. It would conflict with the design aims of LP Policies 3/14 and 3/4, which requires development to respond to its context, and with the advice of the REDG.
13. However, having regard to the assessment set out in the Council's report, I find that the proposed single-storey rear extension would be acceptable in design terms and in its impact on the neighbouring residents. It would not adversely affect the character of the appeal property, the terrace or the street scene, and would accord with the aims of the stated policies. As it is clearly severable from the roof alterations and extension, and both physically and functionally independent, I propose to issue a split decision.

Conditions

14. In addition to the standard time limit, I have attached a condition specifying the approved drawings as this provides certainty. It is also appropriate to control materials to match the existing dwelling, in order to safeguard the character and appearance of the development and the area.

Conclusion

15. The Framework establishes a presumption in favour of sustainable development, and part of its environmental strand is to contribute to protecting and enhancing the built environment. A core planning principle of the Framework includes always seeking to secure high quality design, and for the reasons given above only part of the proposal would comply with this principle, and constitute sustainable development supported through the Framework. As a consequence, I conclude that this appeal should be allowed in part and dismissed in part.

H Lock

INSPECTOR

² By virtue of the provisions of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015, or previous Order.

