

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 19 April 2017

by Andrew Owen BA(Hons) MA MRTPI

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

Decision date: 12 May 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/X0415/W/17/3167207

Hillhouse, 33 Hillfield Square, Chalfont St Peter SL9 0DY

- 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 Mrs S Blackman against the decision of Chiltern District Council.
 - The application Ref CH/2016/1639/FA, dated 6 September 2016, was refused by notice dated 23 December 2016.
 - The development proposed is single storey rear and front extension, roof extension to facilitate loft conversion with dormers. Conversion of detached house into a pair of semi-detached dwellings.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Application for costs

2. An application for costs was made by Mrs S Blackman against Chiltern District Council. This application is the subject of a separate Decision.

Main Issues

3. The main issues are the effect of the development on:
 - i) the character and appearance of the area;
 - ii) the living conditions of the occupiers of No 31 Hillfield Square with respect to their outlook; and
 - iii) highway safety.

Reasons

Character and appearance

4. The site is located in a hilly residential area. There is little uniformity in the designs of the houses nearby but they are exclusively detached properties in generous plots and the spaces between the houses add a distinctive degree of spaciousness to the character of the area.
 5. The majority of the proposed extensions would be located to the rear of the building and would not be tangible from the front. The alterations to the front would largely comprise the swapping of the garage door for a bay window, the removal of an existing bay window and repositioning of the front door. The
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modest scale of these alterations would not materially affect the appearance of the building in the street scene.

6. However, although there is already a second dropped kerb in front of the property, the removal of vegetation on the front boundary to create an additional driveway access combined with the subdivision of the front garden into two with hedging, would signify that the building comprises two semi-detached dwellings on two distinct plots that would be significantly narrower than other plots in the locality.
7. Many of the other neighbouring properties have much of their front garden taken up by hardstanding and in this respect the size of the area of paving proposed across both properties would not appear incongruous. Nonetheless, the potential for double the number of cars to be parked at the site than at present would also visibly indicate an intensification of the use of the plot.
8. The provision of two semi-detached houses on relatively narrow plots would contrast with the firmly established local character and would therefore harm the character and appearance of the street scene and the area. Though the National Planning Policy Framework (the 'Framework') does lend support to the effective use of land, it also, in paragraph 17, requires proposals to take account of the character of areas.
9. As such the proposal would fail to accord with the Framework in this regard and would conflict with Policy GC1 of the Chiltern District Local Plan (CLP) which aims to ensure development is designed to a high standard including its relationship to its surroundings.
10. The drawings indicate an area for bin storage immediately in front of the western semi-detached house. Due to its modest size and distance from the road I consider it unlikely that a bin store in the location indicated would materially affect the appearance of the street scene, and in any event details of its appearance could be secured by a planning condition. However this does not affect my conclusion that overall the development would harm the character and appearance of the area.

Living conditions

11. The neighbouring property at No 31 is on higher land than that at the appeal site. Furthermore, there is a raised decking area in their rear garden which would be immediately adjacent to the proposed roof extension. However, due to the modest scale of this extension when seen from this side and its hipped design, I do not consider it would significantly affect the outlook from this neighbouring property or appear overbearing and therefore the living conditions of its occupiers would not be harmed
12. As such in this respect, the proposal would comply with Policy GC3 of the CLP, which generally requires development to ensure a good standard of amenity is maintained for occupants of adjoining properties, Policy GC2 of the CLP which specifically seeks to ensure sufficient light reaches adjoining land and buildings, and Policy H14 of the CLP which advises that development should not appear overbearing for neighbours. It would also accord with the Framework which seeks a good standard of amenity for all existing occupants of buildings.

Highway safety

13. The proposed parking layout for both semi-detached houses would potentially involve cars reversing out onto the road. This would replicate the existing layout at the appeal site and many of the other properties in the immediate vicinity.
14. The site is in close proximity to the junction of Hillfield Road with Grassingham Road. However these are fairly quiet suburban roads and the development would be likely to generate only a limited volume of additional traffic. As such I do not consider the development would represent an unacceptable risk to highway safety. The view of the highway authority supports my view.
15. Accordingly the development would accord with Policy TR15 of the CLP which, in its explanatory text, advises parking areas should integrate with their surroundings efficiently and safely.

Conclusion

16. Although I have found that the proposal would not adversely affect the living conditions of the neighbouring occupiers or would compromise highway safety, these factors do not outweigh the harm it would cause to the character and appearance of the area. Consequently, for the reasons given above and taking account of all other considerations, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Andrew Owen

INSPECTOR