



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 8 October 2019

by James Taylor BA (Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 16 October 2019

Appeal Ref: APP/E0345/D/19/3236058

10 Pegs Green Close, Reading RG30 2NH

- 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 Aishah Akhtar against the decision of Reading Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 190357, dated 28 February 2019, was refused by notice dated 31 July 2019.
 - The development proposed is described as 'two storey side/rear extension and single storey front and rear extensions, loft conversion with new dormer window and 2 Velux windows'.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are the effect on:
 - i) the character and appearance of the host building and the street scene; and
 - ii) the living conditions of occupiers of 8 and 9 Pegs Green Close with particular regard to outlook and loss of light.

Reasons

Character and appearance

3. 10 Pegs Green Close is a 2-storey, semi-detached property with a hipped roof form. It is part of a pair that has retained a high level of symmetry despite the differences at ground floor level. The host building is sited at the end of a residential cul-de-sac forming part of the terminus viewpoint up the close. Therefore, it is prominent and an important building in the street scene. Within the close there are a variety of house types and many of the dwellings have been altered. However, the prevailing character and appearance is of modestly proportioned housing within a quiet and spacious residential cul-de-sac. Dwellings are set back within their plots with low boundary treatments.
4. The proposed 2-storey side extension would be flush with the front elevation at ground floor and the first floor would be set back by circa 900 mm. At the front, the extension would occupy virtually the whole of the width of the plot. The ridge of the extension would be set below that of the main dwelling. Whilst the first floor set back and reduced ridge provide a degree of subservience, and

the use of matching materials and form would be complimentary, the scale and siting of the development would fail to respect the symmetrical form of the host building. Insufficient subservience is generated in the design for it to be sympathetic to the host building.

5. Additionally, I find that this combined with the built form occupying much of the width of the plot at this point would create a mass and bulk of development that would be out of keeping with the spacious character of the cul-de-sac. The appeal site is prominent within the street scene and the proposals would be clearly visible from the main road and approaches up the cul-de-sac. The 2-storey extension to No 6 is not as prominent, retains a notable separation to the side boundary and is set back at both ground and first floor. The extensions that occupy the full width are limited to single-storey height. As such there are no examples within the road that set any form of precedent for this proposal.
6. Furthermore, I consider that the addition of the proposed porch and provision of open hard standing across the whole frontage would exacerbate the harm. The proposed porch would have an incongruous roof form and add to the mass and bulk. Whilst it may be similar to a porch that would meet permitted development criteria, it is nonetheless part of the proposal before me. The creation of the hard standing to park vehicles would involve the removal of the front boundary wall and planting. Whilst other less prominent examples of hard standing exist in the street scene, and such work may be achieved without the need for planning permission, it would nonetheless erode the subtle qualities of design in the close. Moreover, it would make the frontage of the building more dominant. Therefore, the porch and hard-standing elements of the scheme exacerbate the deleterious impact of the proposed 2-storey development.
7. The scale and mass of the single and 2-storey development to the rear of the site would be significant. However, I do not consider that this would have a detrimental impact to the character and appearance of the host building or surrounding area due to its siting out of public viewpoints. Similarly, I have no concern over the proposed rear dormer window or the 2 rooflights to the front. However, this does not mitigate the harmful effects I have set out above.
8. Therefore, on the first main issue, I conclude that the proposed two-storey side extension, porch and alterations to the front garden would have a harmful effect on the character and appearance of the host building and the street scene. This would be contrary to policy DM9 of the Reading Borough Local Development Framework - Sites and Detailed Policies Document, adopted October 2012 (altered January 2015) (SDPD), policy CS7 of the Reading Borough Local Development Framework - Core Strategy, adopted January 2008 (altered January 2015), the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) and guidance within the - A design guide to house extensions (Supplementary Planning Guidance) (SPG), adopted May 2003; which all seek, amongst other aims, to achieve high design quality.

Living conditions

9. The adjoining neighbour, 9 Pegs Green Close is separated from the appeal site by a high boundary fence. I have observed that No 9 has a window at the rear serving a habitable room next to the boundary. Further to the east No 9 has single-storey additions projecting beyond the rear of the original dwelling. The appellant's plans demonstrate that the proposed single-storey extension would

- be sited adjacent to the boundary and project beyond a 45-degree line taken approximately from the centre of the neighbour's habitable room window.
10. The Council's SPG guides that rear extensions should be located as far away from the side boundaries as possible and a means to safeguard outlook and avoid loss of light is to avoid extensions that infringe on the area within this 45-degree line. Whilst the guidance sets out that this is of particular importance for 2-storey extensions, that does not preclude it being relevant in cases such as this. Nonetheless, each case must be considered on its own merits. Whilst I note that the adopted guidance is aged, I place some weight on it noting that it is in general compliance with the objectives of the Framework in relation to good design and the protection of living conditions.
 11. The proposed rear extension is orientated approximately to the north and the levels are relatively flat. The current open aspect to the rear of the host building provides a source of natural light and outlook for the neighbouring property's occupiers, despite its orientation. The form of the proposed single-storey rear extension would result in a projecting flat roof section, approximately level with the first floor cill, prior to sloping down to ground floor eaves level. Therefore, the entirety of the proposed extension would be higher than the existing fence, sited up to the shared boundary. At points it would be considerably higher than the fence, including areas beyond where the 45-degree line intersects with the scheme. The proposal would be in excess of any permitted development that could be carried out without prior approval. I find that the length and height of this single-storey extension sited along the neighbouring boundary would have a detrimental impact on the living conditions of occupiers of No 9 having regard to outlook and loss of light. I consider that the 2-storey elements would be sited sufficient distance from the boundary to avoid harm to living conditions.
 12. The appellant has highlighted that the existing single-storey extensions to the east of No 9 have a greater impact than those now proposed. However, I have observed that they are part of the existing context, and in any event, at their greatest extent, these flat roof additions are set notably further away from the habitable room window than the proposal.
 13. To the west of the appeal site, 8 Pegs Green Close is currently separated from the host building by driveways and outbuildings. Furthermore, both plots splay to the rear increasing separation towards the back of the proposed extension. To the rear of No 8's driveway is an outbuilding. The side elevation of No 8 has four openings, which from my observations appear to be secondary openings or serving non-habitable rooms. Therefore, despite the scale and mass of the two-storey side and rear extension I find that the proposal would not harm the occupier's living conditions, with regard to outlook and loss of light. The proposal would have some impact on non-habitable rooms and parts of the garden such as the driveway and outbuildings. However, the main areas for sitting out and majority of the garden would be unaffected.
 14. Nonetheless, on the second main issue, I conclude that the proposed single-storey side extension to the rear would have a harmful effect on the living conditions of occupiers of 9 Pegs Green Close with particular regard to outlook and loss of light. This would be contrary to policy DM4 of the SDPD, the Framework and guidance within the SPG which all seek, amongst other aims, to safeguard the living conditions of occupiers from development.

Other matters

15. The appellant has highlighted that the Council's planning officer recommended the scheme for approval and that it was overturned at committee. However, I find that the Council's reasons for refusal are adequately substantiated and relevant policies have been referenced within the formal decision. I consider this to be a finely balanced matter requiring a subjective planning judgement. The committee are not bound by the advice of their officers, nor am I bound by either that advice or the Council's formal decision. I have determined the case on its own merits and in light of the evidence available to me.
16. The appellant has provided an example of another 2-storey householder development within Reading, that was allowed on appeal. I have had regard to the case, and I have noted a number of significant differences between the cases in terms of location, design, orientation and relationship with neighbouring property. Therefore, I consider that it sets no precedent for allowing this appeal.

Conclusion

17. For the reasons given above I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

James Taylor

INSPECTOR