



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 2 October 2019

by R Lankshear BSc (Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 21 October 2019

Appeal Ref: APP/Y1110/D/19/3233339

15 Cowper Avenue, Exeter EX2 6BT

- 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 Alexander Campbell against the decision of Exeter City Council.
 - The application Ref 19/0247/FUL, dated 15 February 2019, was refused by notice dated 31 May 2019.
 - The development proposed is described as 'the erection of a subservient single storey pitched roof side extension to an existing two storey semi-detached dwelling house using matching materials to existing'.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matter

2. In consideration of this appeal, there was discrepancy between the policies and their criteria detailed within the Local Planning Authority's (LPA) officer delegated report and those cited within the decision notice. The Council have subsequently confirmed that there was an error on the decision notice and that it should have read 'contrary to... Policies DG1 (b, d, f, g and h) and DG4 (b) of the Exeter Local Plan First Review', as referred to in the officer's report. I have therefore determined the appeal on this basis.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the development upon the character and appearance of the host property and area.

Reasons

4. The appeal site is a semi-detached dwelling situated on the corner of Cowper Avenue and Shakespeare Road within a predominantly residential area. The wider area is characterised by similar forms of dwellings with those on corner plots being positioned generally at right angles to those on the neighbouring street. The appeal development seeks to introduce a single storey side extension with a hipped roof to match that of the host dwellinghouse.
5. Corner plots within the area are generally devoid of extensions, and hence there is a greater sense of space between properties. There are some limited exceptions, but I am not familiar with the planning status of these structures

and none of those erected within the immediate locality are of a similar scale or design to the appeal proposal.

6. Overall, the street-scene and wider estate has maintained a generally spacious and uniform character and the corner plots contribute positively to these distinctive characteristics. Whilst I acknowledge the design of the extension would seek to respect the roof form of the host dwelling, owing to its width, position and height, the extension would represent a discordant addition that would be detrimental to the pattern and grain of development, characterised by dwellings set within spacious corner plots. As such the appeal proposal, would erode this sense of openness and uniformity to a significant and harmful degree.
7. The above harm would be compounded as owing to the height of the extension, it would not be subordinate in scale to the host property. Furthermore, the proposed reduced window openings at first floor level would materially detract from the existing design synergy between the host property and the dwelling opposite when entering Cowper Avenue.
8. I note the appellant's view that some of the existing open spaces between developments should be built on and that 'linking' properties need not necessarily be unacceptable in character and appearance terms. In this case, I do not share the appellant's view. The estate of houses has been planned in a very deliberate and regimented manner and this adds positively and distinctively to the character and appearance of the locality. The proposal would cause significant harm to the aforementioned identified positive attributes.
9. For the above reasons, I conclude that the proposed development would cause significant harm to the character and appearance of the area. As such, it would not accord with the design and townscape aims of Objectives 8 and 9 and policy CP17 of the Exeter Local Development Framework Core Strategy 2012 (CS) that seeks to ensure that development complements and enhances local character and identity; saved policy DG1 of the Exeter Local Plan First Review 2005 (LP) that seeks, amongst other things, that development should respect buildings, the grain of development and local character and surrounding townscape in terms of height and shape; and the advice contained within the Householder's Guide to Extension Design SPD 2008.

Other Matters

10. I note that Objective 3 of the CS and DG4 of the LP are quoted within the decision notice, that relate amongst other things, to the size and type of homes and quality of amenity for residents, respectively. Whilst such concerns are detailed within the officer report relating to occupiers of the appeal property, these policies are not of direct relevance to the reasons for refusal provided. Given that I have found harm with regard to the main issue, I have not considered this matter further.
11. The appellant has referred to the size of the existing property and has outlined why the proposed extension is needed and that it would result in a property which better reflects national space standards. Whilst I acknowledge these personal benefits, in this case they do not outweigh the significantly adverse impact of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area.

12. The appellant has provided details of a similar extension on a nearby road, although I have not been provided with the exact details or circumstances which led to such an extension being erected. In any event, I have determined this appeal on its individual planning merits and furthermore the extension is not close to the appeal site. The existence of other similar developments within the wider area does not alter or outweigh my conclusion on the main issue.
13. The appellant has raised concern with regard to the manner in which the Council determined the planning application, including matters relating to land ownership, provision of materials samples, site meeting discussions and communications over the principal elevation. Furthermore, there are a number of points of contention raised in comments between the parties including those relating to soft landscaping, room size and bat mitigation. Whilst noting all the comments raised, none of these matters alter or outweigh my conclusion with regard to the main issue.

Conclusion

14. For the reasons outlined above, and taking into account all other matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Robert Lankshear

INSPECTOR