
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 4 December 2019

by S Leonard BA (Hons) BTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 24 December 2019

Appeal Ref: APP/U3935/D/19/3237178

28 Langford Grove, Old Walcot, Swindon, Wilts SN3 1BT

- 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 Drue Watts against the decision of Swindon Borough Council.
 - The application Ref S/HOU/19/0944/PEKO, dated 12 June 2019, was refused by notice dated 6 August 2019.
 - The development proposed is side and rear extension.
-

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

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

Reasons

3. The appeal property is a two storey, semi-detached house with rendered walls under a hipped tiled roof. It is located at the western end of Langford Grove, at the head of the cul-de-sac. Vehicular access is from Langford Grove and serves on-site parking in front of the dwelling. The site is surrounded by residential properties to both sides and to the rear.
4. Langford Grove forms part of a suburban housing area, and is characterised by a mix of terraced, semi-detached and detached two-storey dwellings. The terraced properties are sited in the eastern part of the road. The western end, leading to the cul-de-sac, comprises pairs of hipped roof semi-detached houses, interspersed with a couple of pitched roof detached dwellings. In keeping with the original style of the semi-detached dwellings, the appeal property and its neighbour consist of a strongly symmetrical pair of houses, with matching hipped roof form, including a centrally located feature chimney, and similar materials and fenestration detailing. The roof form is simple and uncluttered, and there is clear spacing to both sides of the building. The building makes a positive contribution to the visual amenities of the street scene, being representative of the original pattern of development in this part of the road.
5. It is proposed to erect a two-storey side extension and a rear single storey extension to provide an enlarged kitchen/diner and family room at ground floor level and an additional bedroom and ensuite on the first floor. The Council's

adopted Residential Extensions and Alterations Supplementary Planning Document 2011 (SPD) provides design guidelines for side extensions, advising that they should avoid any resulting visual imbalance, especially in a pair of otherwise symmetrical and matching semi-detached houses. The SPD advises that oversized side extensions can cause significant disruption to the balance of the host building and harm to the character and appearance of the house and the general street scene. Accordingly, the SPD requires side extensions not to extend wider than half the original dwelling width. The proposed side extension would be approximately 3.5 m wide at its widest point, and the existing dwelling is about 6.2 m wide, so that, in accordance with the SPD, the extension would be out of proportion with the existing dwelling.

6. The extension would have a lower ridge height than that of the existing roof and it would be set back from the front wall, have a tapered footprint at the front, and maintain a gap of about 1 m between the side wall and the side boundary with No.30. Taken together, these factors serve to minimise the impact of the side extension on the existing gap between Nos.28 and 30, so that the extension would not appear unduly cramped in relation to that side boundary. It would, nevertheless, result in the infilling of a large part of the existing gap between the properties and the extension would be readily apparent when viewed from the public realm, due to the position of the property at the turning head of the cul-de-sac, and the open nature of the frontages of both properties.
7. Furthermore, the design of the extension would relate poorly to that of the existing symmetrical hipped roof building. As a pair of semi-detached houses, Nos 26 and 28 have retained the original hipped roof form and the aforementioned clear sense of balance and symmetry. The proposed side addition would unbalance the appearance of the pair of houses and undermine their symmetrical appearance. The tapered shape would be at odds with the existing building, and would contravene the SPD requirement that the extension external side wall be parallel with the existing side wall of the dwelling.
8. The roof form of the side extension would be contrived as a result of its tapered footprint, and would be out of keeping with, and detract from, the existing simple hipped roof of the building. The design and positioning of the front windows would not respect the existing pattern of fenestration on the front elevation, thereby exacerbating the discordant nature of the extension. The result would be an incongruous addition to the semi-detached dwellings, which would detract from the appearance of the building as viewed from the street, and harm the established rhythm of semi-detached development, which is a notable positive feature of the original street development and existing townscape.
9. The appellant has drawn my attention to other extensions and new build developments that have been constructed within the vicinity of the appeal site, in particular, the side extension to 23 Langford Grove and the two new houses at the eastern end of the road within the garden of a property in Burford Road. I find that these developments are not directly comparable with the appeal proposal before me in respect of the form of development proposed and its relationship with neighbouring properties and the surrounding area. Furthermore, the Council has confirmed that the extension to No.23 was approved in 1998 under planning policies which have since been superseded.

Therefore, these developments do not persuade me to come to an alternative view with regard to the main issue. I must determine this appeal on its individual planning merits and against the most up to date local and national planning policies.

10. For the above reasons, I conclude that the proposed development would have a detrimental impact on the character and appearance of the host property and the surrounding area. The appeal scheme would be contrary to the aims of Policy DE1 of the Swindon Borough Local Plan 2026 (2015) (LP) and the Residential Extensions and Alterations SPD 2011, which, amongst other things, seek to ensure that extensions are of a high quality design and are well sited, in scale and proportion, with a shape, mass, and roof in character with the existing dwelling. For similar reasons, the proposal would also be contrary to chapter 12 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2019 (the Framework) which seeks to ensure high quality design.

Other Matters

11. Whilst I have given careful consideration to the reasons for the appellant's desire to provide additional living accommodation, I am mindful of the advice contained in Planning Practice Guidance¹ that, in general, planning is concerned with land use in the public interest. It is also probable that the proposed development would remain long after the current personal circumstances cease to be material. For these reasons, I therefore find that this factor is not sufficient to outweigh the aforementioned harm that would be caused to the character and appearance of the area contrary to the LP, the SPD and the Framework.
12. The Council has not objected to the design and scale of the single storey element of the proposal, and neither do I. However, this is not severable from the rest of the proposed development, and so I cannot issue a split decision.
13. I note the appellant's comments that the proposal would not harm the living conditions of neighbouring property occupiers. However, this is a requirement of the LP and SPD in any case, and does not outweigh my conclusion on the main issue.
14. The appellant has questioned whether or not a site visit was undertaken as part of the Council's determination of the planning application. This is not a matter for consideration as part of this appeal.

Conclusion

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

S Leonard

INSPECTOR

¹ Paragraph 008 Reference ID 21b-008-20140306 – 'What is a material planning consideration?'