
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 14 January 2020

by Peter Mark Sturgess BSc (Hons), MBA, MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State.

Decision date: Thursday, 06 February 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/Q0505/W/19/3241518

38 Ramsden Square, Cambridge, CB4 2BL

- 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 Heike Martin against the decision of Cambridge City Council.
 - The application Ref 18/1397/FUL, dated 3 March 2018, was refused by notice dated 11 November 2019.
 - The development proposed is construct new rear extension to number 38 Ramsden Square as well as construct new shed dormer. The construct a new dwelling to the side of No 38 Ramsden Square in a style in keeping with the existing property.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed

Application for costs

2. An application for costs was made by the appellant, Heike Martin, against Cambridge City Council. This application is the subject of a separate Decision.

Procedural Matter

Description of development

3. The description of development above is that given on the application form. However, it is clear from the documents that the application includes the subdivision of No 38, and the associated works. I have considered the appeal on the basis of the development as described in the Council's decision notice and the appeal form, which more accurately reflects the development.

Main Issues

4. The effect of the proposed development on i) the character and appearance of the area and ii). the living conditions of the future occupiers and on the occupiers of the neighbouring property, with particular regard to the size of the rooms, privacy and overlooking.

Reasons

Character and appearance

5. The character of Ramsden Square is that of semi-detached houses standing in large gardens. All the houses were originally on generous plots with large

rear gardens. There has been a significant amount of alterations to the houses over the years. This has included creating new dwellings by extending the original semi-detached houses to the side and by making use of the roof spaces. There appears to be very few box (or shed) type dormers in evidence.

6. I saw one example of a cantilever design of a side extension on my site visit. This was set back from the front and rear wall of the dwelling and had the appearance of a large truncated flue or chimney. In my opinion it did not impact on the street scene.
7. No 38 Ramsden Square is one half of a semi-detached pair of houses. It remains largely unaltered externally. To its side lies a wide drive. The attached house at No 40, has had a large single storey extension constructed to the rear. Both houses have hipped roofs.
8. At the front the proposed extension would be detailed in the same style as No 38. The side of the extension, next to the boundary with No 36, would be cantilevered to allow access to the rear for bins and bikes. The gable next to No 36 would be raised and a half-hip constructed.
9. To the rear two box dormers would be installed and two large flat roof ground floor extensions. The box dormers, whilst being located on the rear elevation, would be clearly visible when accessing Ramsden Square from Kings Hedges Road. From that vantage point, looking towards the appeal property, no box dormers are currently visible in the area.
10. The key changes the appeal proposal would make to the character of No 38, are the cantilevered extension over the side access way, two rear box dormers and the half-hipped roof. These changes would make the new extension appear top heavy. They would also introduce the incongruous features of box dormers, the cantilevered first floor and the half-hipped roof (where both No 38 and No 40 have full hipped roofs at present) on to a modest pair of semi-detached houses. The house with the extension would adversely impact on the street scene by introducing elements which would make the building appear unbalanced at this location. This would significantly harm the character and appearance of this part of Ramsden Square when viewed from the square itself and when approaching the square from Kings Hedges Road.
11. Policies 52, 55, 56 and 57 of the development plan, the Cambridge Local Plan – 2018 (CLP) are relevant to this appeal. These policies seek to protect the character and appearance of the city's residential areas.
12. The appeal proposal is in conflict with the policies of the development plan as it would subdivide an existing plot with a form of new development that would significantly damage the character and appearance of the area. This would occur through the introduction of features such as the box dormers and the cantilevered extension with a half-hipped roof, which makes the building appear top heavy and unbalanced when viewed from surrounding roads. In this respect the proposed building would not successfully integrate into the street scene or local area as required by the Policy 56

Living conditions

13. Flat 38c would have a floor area of 66 square metres, less than the 70 square metres required by Policy 50 of the CLP.
14. I find that the proposal is in conflict with Policy 50 of the CLP, as it would not provide the amount of living space required for the occupiers of the flat. In view of the small overall size and poor layout of the proposed flat, I find that a 4 square metre shortfall in the floorspace would be harmful to the living conditions of any future occupiers. This view is reinforced when the lack of natural light to the proposed kitchen and lounge/dining area are taken into account.
15. Flat 38d would be 1 square metre below the required floor space for this type of dwelling, set out in the CLP. I am not persuaded that this would significantly harm the living conditions of the future occupiers of this dwelling due to proposed room sizes, the provision of built in storage capacity and the layout of the accommodation
16. Policy 51 aims to ensure that all housing development is of a size, configuration and internal layout to enable Building Regulations requirement M4(2), accessible and adaptable homes, to be met.
17. The explanation to Policy 51 states that this should be achieved without the need for special adaption of design. I am concerned that No 38d would not meet the accessibility standards set out in Policy 51, notwithstanding the appellants intention to allow for the retrofitting of a stairlift. I find the appeal proposal in conflict with Policy 51 of the CLP and would harm the living conditions of potential future occupiers with mobility difficulties due to the lack of accessible accommodation throughout the dwelling.
18. The privacy currently enjoyed by the occupants of No 40 Ramsden Square, would be harmed by the balcony proposed at No 38c. Due to the ability of the potential occupiers to walk to the end of the balcony, this would be their primary outdoor space and the balcony would overlook the area of garden nearest the house. This level of loss of privacy is in conflict with Policy 53 of the CLP.

Other Matters

19. The appellant has referred to other properties in Ramsden Square that have been developed in a similar way to that proposed. I find that they do not have the same detrimental impact on the street scene, because they tend to be on corner plots which have less impact or are set back from the front and rear wall of the property.

Conclusion

20. I find that having regard to all matters before me, including the policies of the development plan, when taken as a whole, the appeal should be dismissed.

Peter Mark Sturgess

INSPECTOR