



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 13 January 2020

by David Carter BSc MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 11th February 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/Q0505/D/19/3239714

16 Langham Road, Cambridge CB1 3SE

- 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 Edward Cartwright against the decision of Cambridge City Council.
 - The application Ref 18/1506/FUL, dated 21 September 2018, was refused by notice dated 1 August 2019.
 - The development proposed is 2 storey side and rear extensions and roof extension.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matter

2. The Council requested that I view the appeal site from both Nos 14 and 18 Langham Road. Although I did view the appeal site from No 14, I was unable to gain access to the rear of No 18. Notwithstanding this, from what I have seen and read, I do not consider that the lack of access to No 18 prevents me from coming to a decision on this appeal.

Main Issues

3. The main issues are the effect of the proposal on the:
 - (i) character and appearance of the host property and surrounding area; and
 - (ii) living conditions of neighbouring occupiers with regard to light and outlook.

Reasons

Character and appearance

4. No 16 Langham Road is a semi-detached dwelling. Langham Road has a number of dwellings of a similar style and size to the host property. There is an existing rear flat-roofed ground floor extension which would be replaced by the new extension. There is also an existing garage building set back from the rear of the dwelling close to the boundary. While the future of the garage building (which is shared with No 18) is not clear, the side extension would in any event remove its ability to continue to serve as a garage for No 16. The Block Plan indicates that the rear extension would be built up to the front of the garage and would block outdoor access to the rear garden. Properties in the locality, including the appeal site, have very long gardens. No 14 is already extended to the rear including a half width first floor extension.

5. The extensions proposed include a 2-storey extension of 1.3m to the side of the existing dwelling and a single storey rear extension aligned to the widened side elevation which would extend a further 4m beyond the line of the existing rear extension. There would be a loft conversion/ dormer extension to the side and rear. Most of the extended elements would have flat roofs. New window openings on the side elevation would be provided on all 3 levels but these would be limited to bathrooms, utility area and stairs.
6. The extensions proposed at No 16 are extensive and would visually dominate the original dwelling as seen from the front, side and rear elevations by virtue of their scale, bulk, design, appearance as well as their positioning and proximity to the neighbouring dwelling at No 18. The changes to the front elevation would include replacement of the hipped roof with a gable end and the provision of roof lights. While I acknowledge that the side extension would be set back from the main building line, the new gable end and flat roofed elements would be visible from the public domain and would further change the character of this traditional suburban estate.
7. I note the appellant has highlighted other nearby properties where extensive changes have been implemented including side, rear and loft conversions. Some have a modern appearance and use materials contrasting with the original host buildings. However, one key feature to date is that the front elevations of the original dwellings have remained largely intact, offering a degree of protection to the character of the area. I do not have full details of these other properties before me and therefore give limited weight to their consideration in this appeal. Nevertheless, in my view, some of these look out of place and detract from the established character and appearance of the area. As such, I disagree with the view that these examples provide sufficient justification for the appeal proposal. Indeed, in order to ensure the character and appearance of the area suffers no further deterioration, I find the opposite to be the case.
8. Examination of the side and rear elevations suggests that the proposed changes are so extensive that little, if any characteristics of the original dwelling would remain. From the front, the symmetry of the pair of dwellings would be unbalanced and the use of flat roofs being visually at odds with prevailing pitched roofs. To summarise, the scale, bulk and design of the proposal would be disproportionate and unsympathetic to the original dwelling and as such would appear incongruous with the prevailing character of the property and surrounding estate.
9. Therefore, I conclude that the proposed development would have a significant harmful impact on the character and appearance of the host property and surrounding area. As such, it would conflict with Policy 58 of the Cambridge Local Plan 2018 (LP). Amongst other things, the policy seeks to permit alterations and extensions which do not adversely impact on character and appearance, ensure size and design that respects the existing building and avoid changes to the roof that are unsympathetic and not in keeping with Appendix E (roof extensions design guide).

Living conditions

10. As part of the appeal the appellant has commissioned a Daylight and Sunlight Study to address some of the issues in the second reason for refusal. This report concludes that the proposed development would have a low impact on

the light receivable by neighbouring properties and would sufficiently safeguard the daylight and sunlight amenity of neighbouring occupiers. The Council have not commented on this study as part of the appeal. However, the analysis in the study (Appendix 2) identifies some reduction in daylighting, particularly to No 18 although this appears to affect non-habitable rooms for the most part. On this basis of this evidence, I accept that the proposal would not be likely to have a material detrimental impact on daylighting and sun-lighting, at least in respect of most habitable rooms and gardens, thereby meeting BRE tests.

11. Notwithstanding this, from the evidence before me, I consider that the scale and bulk of the proposal are such that they would dominate and have an overbearing effect due to the positioning and proximity on the occupiers of No 18 in terms of their outlook.
12. Consequently, I conclude that the proposal, by virtue of visual dominance would have a significant harmful effect on the living conditions of the occupiers of the neighbouring property (No 18) with regard to outlook. As such, it therefore conflicts with Policy 58 of the LP which seeks to permit alterations and extensions when they do not adversely impact on the living conditions through, among other things, visual domination.

Other Matters

13. The appellant has made reference to permitted development. While it is a possibility and may be an option for the appellant to undertake part of the proposed scheme through permitted development, the appeal must be and has been determined on the basis of the proposal before me taking into consideration its merits and circumstances.
14. The appeal proposals are unclear in relation to the provision for parking. Removal of the vehicular access to the existing garage and building over the space to the side of the dwelling would leave No 16 with one parking space on the drive to the front. The Highways Authority have noted the lack of clarity. The concern must be that a single parking space would be inadequate, and the likely consequence would be to displace parking demand onto the street. I also note that the proposals do not set out the proposed arrangements for bin and cycle storage. Notwithstanding these points, these contributing factors have been given limited weight in my decision making.

Planning Balance

15. The appeal proposal would be beneficial in adding to the quality and quantity of the living space at No 16. However, those benefits have to be balanced against the significant harm that would be caused to both the character and appearance of the area and the living conditions of the occupiers of the neighbouring property (No 18). In this appeal the harm outweighs the benefits, thus leading me to my overall conclusion to dismiss.

Conclusion

16. For the reasons given above, and having had regard to all other matters raised, I conclude the appeal should be dismissed.

David Carter

INSPECTOR