



Appeal Decision

Site Visit made on 7 June 2021

by Mr Andrew Smith BA (Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 21st June 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/Q0505/D/21/3269116

29 Beche Road, Cambridge CB5 8HX

- 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 & Mrs Meijers against the decision of Cambridge City Council.
 - The application Ref 20/03920/HFUL, dated 21 September 2020, was refused by notice dated 19 January 2021.
 - The development proposed is single storey porch to the front of the property, single/double storey extensions to the rear with new box dormer to the roof.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. Potential revised plans¹ (the revised plans) make up part of the appellants' submission. The evidence before me indicates that these were formulated in response to emails dated 22 and 29 October 2020, which, amongst other matters, outlined the Council's main concerns and its intention to refuse planning permission. No request for amended plans made up part of these emails and, even though feedback was provided at officer level post-submission, the revised plans were not formally accepted nor consulted upon by the Council.
3. The appeal process should not be used to evolve a scheme and, in the interests of ensuring that no one with an interest in the outcome of the appeal is prejudiced, it is important that the plans considered at appeal stage are essentially the same as those considered and consulted upon by the Council at planning application stage. This importance is magnified in the case of a householder appeal. Indeed, the householder appeals service does not provide interested parties with the opportunity to submit written representations at appeal stage.
4. The intended revisions include a redesign of the proposed rear roof dormer and a remodelled rear extension at first floor level. The revised plans evolve and materially alter the scheme that was originally submitted. I thus do not accept the revised plans and shall consider the appeal based on the initial plans² that were submitted to the Council for determination.

¹ 20PL102 rev 01; 20PL103 rev 01

² Location Plan (scale 1:1250); 20PL101; 20PL102; 20PL103

Main Issues

5. The main issues are:

- Whether or not the proposed roof dormer and first-floor rear extension would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Riverside and Stourbridge Common Conservation Area (the CA); and
- The effect upon the living conditions of the residential occupier(s) of No 27 Beche Road (No 27), having particular regard to outlook.

Reasons

The CA

6. The significance of the CA as a designated heritage asset is drawn, in-part, from its traditional brick-built terraced residential streets, which often display high degrees of uniformity and offer visual interest through various ornate architectural features. Indeed, Beche Road is a terraced residential street where such characteristics apply.
7. As indicated in the Council's Roof Extensions Design Guide (Appendix E to the Cambridge Local Plan 2018) (the Design Guide), roof extensions must not be so large as to dominate the existing roof or to overwhelm their immediate setting. In this case, owing to the near full roof coverage and boxlike design that is intended, the proposed dormer would dominate and fail to respect the host property's proportions. Indeed, notwithstanding its relatively discreet rear positioning, the dormer would appear as an unduly prominent and insensitive addition as experienced by local residents. Furthermore, the proposed Juliette balcony would exacerbate these concerns by further drawing attention away from the host dwelling's original and more traditional elements.
8. Several rear-facing roof dormers of varied form and composition have a visual relationship to the appeal site. A number of these are generously sized and/or of boxlike form. However, as indicated in the Design Guide, proposals for roof extensions which perpetuate forms of existing but poorly designed roof extensions are unlikely to be acceptable. Moreover, large boxlike dormers can be observed to serve a low proportion of the local housing stock and to sit uncomfortably within a historic built environment that typically exhibits a high level of uniformity.
9. A recently approved³ flat-roofed dormer at No 36 Beche Road (No 36) has been referenced within the evidence before me. Whilst I have not been provided with the full details, it is apparent that the rear roof slope of No 36 does not have a direct visual relationship to the rear of the appeal site. It is also unclear whether a dormer covering close to the entire rear roof slope was under consideration in that case. For these reasons, the permission at No 36 is of limited relevance.
10. The proposed first-floor extension would be of not insignificant size and be visible to a range of local occupiers. It would be of flat-roofed and zinc-clad design and would sit to the immediate side of an existing pitched-roof outtrigger of traditional form and appearance. Indeed, the intended first-floor addition would fail to suitably respect the proportions and outward appearance of the

³ 20/03661/HFUL

outrigger. I have not been made aware of any similar first-floor level extensions locally, and none where readily observable upon my inspection of the site's immediate surroundings. I find that the first-floor extension would appear as a discordant and unsympathetic addition to the host dwelling and to the wider CA.

11. For the above reasons, the proposed roof dormer and first-floor rear extension would fail to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the CA (a designated heritage asset) and would lead to less than substantial harm being caused to its heritage significance. As set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (February 2019), any less than substantial harm to a designated heritage asset should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.
12. For the avoidance of doubt, I find that no other individual element of the proposal would lead to an enhancement of the CA's character or appearance. Furthermore, any possible public benefits brought about by providing enlarged/improved accommodation at the site would attract limited weight insufficient to outweigh the harm to the CA that would be caused by the proposed rear dormer and first-floor rear extension.
13. The proposal conflicts with Policies 58 and 61 of the Cambridge Local Plan (October 2018) (the Local Plan) in so far as these policies set out that proposals should be of an appropriate scale, form, height, massing, alignment and detailed design which will contribute to local distinctiveness, complement the form and scale of heritage assets and respect the character, appearance and setting of the locality.

Living conditions

14. The proposed rear extensions would run the southwestern boundary of the site. No 27 sits to the southwest of the site and, like the appeal property, takes the form of a two-storey terraced dwelling served by a rear outrigger. It was apparent from my inspection of No 27's grounds that a single-aspect kitchen is contained within the outrigger. Indeed, the main window opening to this room directly faces the appeal site.
15. The proposed ground floor level extension, whilst of not insignificant depth, would be of insufficient height (when considered in isolation) to have an adverse overbearing effect upon any neighbouring occupier at No 27. Indeed, a pathway that runs between the appeal property and No 27 provides for a stepped back relationship. I am also satisfied that available outlook from any rear-facing opening that serves No 27 would not be unduly impacted upon by the scheme. This is particularly when noting the oblique nature of any future views of the rear extensions that would avail from such vantage points.
16. However, the intended works at first-floor level would introduce built form of considerable height and stature opposite to and in proximity to No 27's facing kitchen window. Indeed, the intended first-floor addition's height would closely resemble the eaves height of the main dwelling as opposed to the eaves of the existing outrigger that the extension would sit alongside. Notwithstanding the presence of a separating pathway, I find that the scheme would have an adverse effect upon the standard of outlook currently attainable from No 27's kitchen space. Indeed, an overbearing relationship would ensue.

17. Significant ground and first floor extensions of considerable height and depth located upon other local sites have been referred to by the appellants. However, I must consider the proposal that is before me upon its own individual merits and in recognition of the site-specific circumstances to hand.
18. For the above reasons, the proposal would cause harm to the living conditions of the residential occupier(s) of No 27, having particular regard to outlook. The proposal conflicts with Policies 56 and 58 of the Local Plan in so far as these policies set out that alterations and extensions to existing buildings will be permitted where they do not unacceptably visually dominate neighbouring properties.

Other Matters

19. I have noted objections/concerns raised by interested parties with respect to matters including the depth of the ground floor extension, the effects of adding a porch, the specification of front-facing windows, fire safety and the potential for overshadowing and loss of privacy to arise. However, as I have found the proposal to be unacceptable for other reasons, it is not necessary for me to explore these matters further here.
20. The proposal conflicts with the development plan when read as a whole, and material considerations do not lead me to a decision otherwise.

Conclusion

21. For the reasons given above, the appeal is dismissed.

Andrew Smith

INSPECTOR