The Planning Inspectorate

Appeal Decision

Site Visit made on 14 June 2021

by Robin Buchanan BA (Hons) MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 02 July 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/X1545/D/20/3259168
8 The Cobbins, Burnham-On-Crouch CM0 8QL

- 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 and Mrs Lambert against the decision of Maldon District Council.
- The application Ref HOUSE/MAL/20/00364, dated 2 April 2020, was refused by notice dated 18 June 2020.
- The development proposed is described as 'proposed part single, part 2 storey side/rear extensions. Including roof alterations to proposed attached garage with planning approval ref HOUSE/MAL/19/01092'.

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Application for Costs

2. An application for costs was made by Mr and Mrs Lambert against Maldon District Council. This application is the subject of a separate Decision.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the development on the character and appearance of the host building and the wider area.

Reasons

4. The host building, No 8 The Cobbins, is a two-storey detached house in a landscaped garden. It is typical of some houses in The Cobbins development which is a residential suburb of Burnham-On-Crouch. These houses have narrow rectangular floorplans with a long main gabled roof and ridge, including short gabled projections front and rear at one end and, next to this, a step-down in ridge height to a single storey integral double garage with accommodation in the roof above. Most of the other houses in The Cobbins are broadly comparable in overall design and appearance, though a shorter main roof and deeper gabled projection on one side only gives a more compact 'L' shaped main floorplan to these houses.

5. The distribution of these two house types in The Cobbins and their variation in roof forms and heights, allied to their siting and orientation to each other and to surrounding roads, gives a perceptible pattern and identity to this development and a verdant, spacious feel to this area. These characteristics are locally distinctive. The proposed development would enlarge the house with a two-storey side extension attached to a double garage at the front and a single storey rear extension.

6. The resulting house would retain a step down in the height of the main roof at one end, over the existing integral garage. However, the two storey extension would significantly increase the length of the house (excluding the integral garage) and the main roof at the other end — by about 4.6m according to the appellants' plans, or 5m according to the appellants' grounds of appeal[1]. Either way, by approximately 50% and across the approximately 4.9m full width of the house at two-storey height to eaves and ridge levels. It would therefore be an inordinate addition to the design and appearance of the house and unduly increase its overall scale and massing to eaves level and main roof ridge height.

7. The host building is not sited next to The Cobbins public highway and the visibility of this extension, and the manifestation of the adverse impacts that I refer to above would vary — depending on the angle or direction of view, the effects of perspective and as the juxtaposition of it to other houses and trees would change and overlap, so the extent of gaps would become tighter or more relaxed. However, the siting and bulk of this extension would excessively reduce openness to adjoining houses, especially No 2 The Cobbins which would be the closest. It would therefore give an appreciably more built-up appearance to development and be at odds with the general extent of separation and spaciousness between houses in The Cobbins.

8. In my judgement, I saw that the upper part of this extension would be unduly conspicuous in public views on one side from within The Cobbins streetscene, including in particular through the gaps between houses at Nos 2, 4, 6, 12 and 14. In addition, despite the tall boundary hedgerow on the other side, and that the roof slope would pitch away from Southminster Road, the increased main roof length and ridge height would be overly prominent in more distant views in this streetscene in either direction and also from the Barnmead Way streetscene opposite the appeal site. It would as a result stand out in comparison to the prevailing more limited extent of the other houses in The Cobbins and nearby that can already be observed in these views.

9. The appellants have referred me to some other houses in The Cobbins, which I also saw at my site visit. The side extension at No 4 has increased the length of this house, though it has resulted in a staggered, not linear, floorplan. In addition, this extension is one and a half storey in scale and massing with ridge and eave heights below the main roof and the house is on an open corner plot. This development complements the variation in the roof form of this house and others in The Cobbins, including No 8, and is subservient in design, appearance, scale, massing and bulk and does not therefore dominate No 4 or the streetscene at this point.

10. In addition, while a pitched roof over a dormer window is not part of the appeal proposal, nonetheless at No 9 and No 29 these are relatively minor additions to these houses, appropriate in design and appearance, and do not approach any main roof ridge height or add significantly to the scale, massing or bulk of these houses or alter their floorplans. Similarly, an integral garage at No 15 has been converted to living accommodation, but this does not significantly alter the appearance of that house and such works are not anyway part of the proposed development in this appeal. No 3 has a noticeably longer linear floorplan and I agree with the appellants that in this regard it is an 'anomaly'.

[1] Prepared by Smart Planning Ltd

I consider that it does not therefore reflect the prevailing character and appearance of most of the houses in The Cobbins, as I have described above, or therefore provide an appropriate template or justification for the appeal proposal. Consequently, all of this other development can be readily distinguished from the appeal proposal.

11. I find that the overall design, appearance, scale, bulk and siting of the appeal proposal would not be subservient and result in a dominant addition to No 8. The development would harm the character and appearance of the host building and the wider area. It would not accord with Policies D1 and H4 of the Maldon District Local Development Plan, July 2017. Amongst other things, these policies seek to ensure that development respects the surrounding local context, including the character of the existing building, and is appropriate in architectural style, detailed design features, height, size, scale, form, massing, townscape setting, layout and orientation and contributes positively to the public realm and enhances local distinctiveness.

12. It would also conflict with the National Planning Policy Framework paragraphs 124, 127(a), (b), (c) and (d) and 170 which include that development should create high quality buildings and places that add to the overall quality of the area, be visually attractive as a result of good architecture and layout, be sympathetic to local character, maintain a strong sense of place and enhance the local environment.

Other Matters

13. On the evidence before me, the appeal site is not of any historic value and is not in a Conservation Area or within the setting of a heritage asset. The appeal proposal would also not adversely affect the living conditions of the existing occupiers of any nearby dwellings. The absence of harm in these regards is a neutral factor in my decision.

14. The appellants' have alluded to some personal circumstances in this appeal, though do not seek to rely on these matters. Nevertheless, while I sympathise with the appellants' apparent needs in this regard, I have borne in mind that the development would remain long after these personal circumstances have ceased to be material. Therefore, this consideration does not outweigh the harm that I have identified in the main issue above.

15. The appellants' have also referred to other development at the appeal site granted planning permission by the Council[2]. However, it is not part of the proposed development in this appeal, which I have determined on its individual planning merits.

Conclusion

16. For the reasons given above, I conclude that the appeal does not succeed.

Robin Buchanan

INSPECTOR

[2] Council's Ref HOUSE/MAL/19/01092