

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 23 August 2022

by R C Shrimplin MA(Cantab) DipArch RIBA FRTPI FCI Arb MCIL

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 10 October 2022

Appeal Reference: APP/W1525/D/22/3299313
18 Chalklands, Sandon, Chelmsford CM2 7TH

- 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 Valji against the decision of Chelmsford City Council.
 - The application (reference 22/00088/FUL, dated 15 January 2022) was refused by notice dated 16 March 2022.
 - The development proposed is described in the application form as "*proposed raising of roof by 900mm to create second floor accommodation; single storey extensions to the porch and front of garage, and an extension to the first floor at the front / side of the main property sited over the existing garage*".
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main issue

2. The main issue to be determined in this appeal is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the host building and its surroundings.

Reasons

3. The appeal site lies within a residential enclave, some way to the south-east of the main built-up area of Chelmsford, in a mainly rural part of Essex. Development at Howe Green (part of Sandon) extends along the Southend and East Hanningfield Roads and development has also been laid out between them, south-east of their junction. Chalklands is a long cul-de-sac, leading southwards from East Hanningfield Road, with various side branches. It is characterised by large, detached houses on generous plots in a setting that is essentially suburban in character.
4. The appeal site is located on a side branch of the cul-de-sac, off the main line of Chalklands. This section of road slopes gently upwards to a turning head and the houses in this group are particularly large. Nevertheless, they are set back from the road, with wide frontages, creating an open appearance, with some trees and shrubs providing a foil to the buildings. Moreover, the two-storey houses themselves stand apart from each other, usually separated by single-storey elements, although some extension and alteration has taken place. The houses in this group exhibit a variety of materials and some special

features, such as classical columns, but they are in harmony with each other, of a similar scale and making use of traditional forms and a limited palette of materials.

5. Number 18 Chalklands stands at the head of this short branch cul-de-sac, but to one side, above the level of the road and set between two neighbouring houses. It is mainly constructed of brickwork, with some rendering, under a tiled roof. The footprint is irregular, providing design interest, and it has some special architectural features on the front elevation.
6. It is now proposed to alter and extend the house. The main roof would be raised by adding brickwork above the first floor windows, thereby raising the overall height of the main part of the house and creating a new second floor. In addition, single storey extensions would be added alongside the porch and at the front of the garage and a further extension would be added to the first floor above the existing garage.
7. The 'National Planning Policy Framework' (which was introduced in 2012 and last revised in July 2021) emphasises the aim of "achieving well designed places" in the broadest sense (notably at Section 12), while making effective use of land and encouraging economic activity. It is aimed at achieving good design standards generally. New development should add to the overall quality of the area and be visually attractive and sympathetic to local character and history, although it is also recognised that appropriate change may include increased densities.
8. Policies in the Development Plan reflect these basic considerations. Notably, Policy DM23 of the 'Chelmsford Local Plan' (which was formally adopted on 27 May 2020) is concerned with "high quality and inclusive design" and is intended to encourage development that respects the character and appearance of its surroundings and of host buildings.
9. The proposed raising of the main roof would introduce an awkward and uncharacteristic architectural form. The introduction of additional brickwork above the first floor windows would not be consistent with traditional structural design and would have an ungainly appearance. Moreover, the additional bulk of the new upper floor would differentiate the building from its near neighbours in a way that would undermine the harmony of the existing streetscene.
10. The new first floor extension above the existing large garage would create a two-storey structure with a gabled roof, projecting forward of the main part of the house and extending close to its boundary with number 16. This would be intrusive in itself and would markedly reduce the visual separation between the neighbouring houses. Thus, it would alter the townscape in a significant way and for the worse. Currently, the large houses around this short cul-de-sac are clearly distinct from each other, set in their own substantial plots, but this pattern would be disrupted by the proposed new extension.
11. On the other hand, the proposed single-storey front extension to the garage would be in keeping with the existing design and would not be unduly bulky in itself. The proposed single storey link corridor across the front of the house would be unattractive as an extension to the porch (and would have an impact on the internal layout of the house), but it would have only a limited effect on the overall design.

12. Considered as a whole, the proposed scheme of alterations and extensions would create an ungainly design, overly bulky, ill-proportioned and out of keeping with its surroundings. It would, moreover, reduce the sense of space between adjoining properties and undermine the open character of the layout of the cul-de-sac. Hence, I am convinced that the scheme would be unacceptable in planning terms.
13. In reaching those conclusions, I have taken account of the planning history of the site, as described in the submissions, including the permission that was granted in 2011 and which granted planning permission for raising the roof of the house to create a second floor. I am conscious that this scheme was the same as that part of the current proposals. Even so, I am also aware that the earlier planning permission is now out of date and that newer planning policies apply. In any case, the current scheme as a whole is a different project and is to be considered on its own merits. Similarly, I am of the view that other historic decisions in relation to properties in Chalklands are of limited assistance in an architectural appraisal of this scheme.
14. Evidently, the appeal site lies within an established built-up area, which is "sustainable" in planning terms and the proposed development would add to the existing accommodation. Nevertheless, I am convinced that the harm that would be done to the character and appearance of the existing house and its surroundings outweigh the benefits of the project. Hence, I have concluded that the scheme before me would conflict with both national and local planning policies (including the Development Plan) and that it ought not to be allowed. Although I have considered all the matters that have been raised in the representations, I have found nothing to cause me to alter my decision.

Roger C. Shrimplin

INSPECTOR