



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 6 September 2022

by A.Graham BA(hons) MAued IHBC

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 18 November 2022.

Appeal Ref: APP/C4605/D/22/3300284
25 Laburnum Road, Birmingham B30 2BA

- 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 Morgan Jones against the decision of Birmingham City Council.
 - The application Ref 2022/00579/PA dated 25 January 2022, was refused by notice dated 25 May 2022.
 - The application is for erection of a two storey side and two and single storey rear extension.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matter

2. The description of development in the heading above has been taken from the Council's decision notice and differs from that used on the Appellant's original application. In Part E of the appeal form it is stated that the description of development is the same as that used by the Council and as such I have used this description accordingly which I feel accurately represents the scope of the proposals.

Main Issues

3. The main issue is the impact of the proposal upon the character and appearance of the Bournville Conservation Area.

Reasons

4. The appeal property is a semi detached house that, like many of its neighbours, exhibits typical details associated with the early garden village of Bournville. The house is modest in scale but still exhibits a well proportioned example of its type with two reception rooms to the ground floor with kitchen/bathroom outshot to the rear and three further bedrooms to the first floor. These bedrooms appear partially recessed within the low roof form and their windows take on the appearance of partial dormers because of this.
5. Laburnum Road exhibits some subtle differences in housetypes but most are typical of the model village worker's houses. Indeed, the appeal property forms part of a short row of what appear to be near identical properties each contributing to a more or less symmetrical design. The modest scale and width of the properties enhance this perception along with features that consist of

partial dormer windows to the front, central chimney stacks and bay windows serving the ground floors.

6. To the side of the appeal property there is a gap that is typical of such suburban areas and enables the property to be read as a single entity within the streetscene. There is an existing timber garage and gate giving access to the rear of the property however where an historic greenhouse type extension has at one time been constructed alongside the kitchen.
7. The property's rear garden extends some distance downhill from Laburnum Road and from this area the rears of several properties can be clearly seen, as can some existing side and rear extensions of varying types and sizes, most of which respect the overall design aesthetic of the properties here.
8. The scheme before me, whilst taking some cues from other such schemes nearby, would extend to both the side and rear so as to create a larger kitchen/dining area and ground floor WC along with a new bedroom and bathroom to the first floor. The two storey side extension would replace the existing timber garage and would be both slightly set back and set down from the ridge of the parent property. This extension would then continue, following the eaves height of the house and culminate in a first floor rear gable feature facing onto the rear garden.
9. In considering this appeal I am required by Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to pay 'special attention' to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the Bournville Conservation Area. The Act is reflected in The Framework, which illustrates the positive contribution that heritage assets can make to the creation of sustainable and economically viable communities.
10. Much of the significance of the Bournville Conservation Area is its legacy of being one of the first garden villages in the world. Its importance is therefore international and it reflects the attitudes of the Cadbury family in providing high quality housing for their employees as well as championing early suburban and Arts and Crafts inspired house design. The significance of the area is not only obtained aesthetically through the architectural quality, attention to detail and neo vernacular designs therefore, but it is also reflected in the historical associations concerned with the hierarchy of buildings and the often simple, compact designs used as a result of Cadbury's intention to create modest, yet practical homes for all.
11. The appeal property exhibits many of these aesthetic qualities but it also has a simplicity of form and design that sets this and many other such houses in this street apart in terms of this simplicity of design and scale. The appeal proposal would result however in a series of extensions that would disrupt this simplicity through being over large when compared to the more modest footprint of the host property.
12. Although I concur with both parties that the design quality itself is generally appropriate, the more fundamental issue of scale, massing, and its associated impact upon the understanding and ultimately, the significance, of the host property is not. Although the rear gable element would reflect traditional patterns, the two storey side extension would appear more contrived and have the effect of diluting the more unassuming form and footprint of the house, especially when seen from Laburnum Road itself.

13. The side extension would encroach upon the openness between number 25 and its neighbour and, despite the set back and set down, this would have the affect of undermining something of the simple, symmetrical qualities associated with several properties along the street here as well as significantly reducing the importance of the gap between such houses. As a result, a degree of harm would occur to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.
14. The rear extensions, despite their generally sound form and aesthetic proportions, would cause a change to the rear elevation of the property. Despite this, I saw on my site visit that the rear of the property had already seen some extension to its ground floor, albeit in the form of an historic greenhouse/conservatory type structure.
15. The rear gable extension would add to this but would protrude some distance and this would, once again, alter the relative simplicity of the rear elevation. Although I consider that a suitably designed extension here could be made to work the proposal as submitted would cause harm to the understanding and legibility of the existing house through being overly large and diluting the original footprint of the building.
16. Although, ultimately I find less impact through the proposed changes to the rear, cumulatively this element, together with the proposed side extension would cause significant harm to the host property that does not appear to have been outweighed by any perceived public benefits other than the improvements internally.
17. Although I consider that there would be scope for a suitably designed rear extension were it to better distinguish between the old and new elements of the original building's massing and footprint, the scheme before me ultimately fails in this regard.
18. When considering this proposal as a whole therefore I conclude that the proposal would ultimately undermine the simplicity and modest scale of the existing property and would fail to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Conservation Area as a result. Therefore, in the absence of Public Benefits to the outweigh this harm I conclude that the proposal before me would conflict with Policies PG3 and TP12 of the Birmingham Development Plan 2017 which seek to protect the city's heritage assets through good placemaking.

Other Matters

19. I have been made aware of another recent appeal decision¹ concerned with a different property located within the Bournville Conservation Area that the Appellant feels supports their case for these extensions. I have however few details with regards the particular proposals determined within this appeal and as such I can only give this matter limited weight.
20. I do notice reference within this appeal however to properties on Linden Road differing in their architectural design and I saw on my site visit that there were noticeable architectural differences on Linden Road. In the case before me, I consider that part of what makes Laburnum Road significant are the number of

¹ Appeal Decision Ref: APP/P4605/D/22/3290600 98 Linden Road, Birmingham April 2022.

very similar and very simple, house types, especially within the row of three pairs of semi detached houses of which the appeal property forms part.

21. As such, although I give some weight to this past appeal decision, ultimately I conclude that the precise elements at stake are sufficiently different so as to lead me to a different conclusion.

Conclusion

22. For the reasons given above, and taking into account of all other matters raised, I dismiss the appeal.

A Graham

INSPECTOR