



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 12 September 2023

by K Jones BA (Hons) DipLA CMLI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 13 October 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/Y1110/D/23/3320257

26 B Ide Lane, Alphington, Exeter, Devon EX2 8UR

- 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 Tearle against the decision of Exeter City Council.
 - The application Ref 22/1659/FUL, dated 28 November 2022, was refused by notice dated 24 February 2023.
 - The development proposed is a two-storey side extension and single storey front extension and alterations.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the development on the character and appearance of the host dwelling and the surrounding area.

Reasons

3. Ide Lane is a meandering road which extends a considerable distance around the edge of the city. I saw during my site visit that it contains a variety of architectural styles and materials, on buildings ranging from 18th Century thatched cottages through to 21st Century housing. Part-way along its length, the appeal property occupies a visually prominent corner plot, at the junction of Ide Lane and Smith Field Road.
4. 26 A and 26 B Ide Lane sit distinctly separately from neighbouring houses on either side, with a notable set back from the road, and generous front gardens. Whilst materials vary considerably elsewhere on the lane, this area is characterised by brick-built relatively modern detached and semi-detached properties. Though not designated, the large plot frontage and consistent brick elevations of the appeal property make a positive and consistent contribution to the character of the area, marking the transition from the more densely developed urban grain of Ide Lane to the east, to the looser and more open plots to the west.
5. Whilst the appeal property is within a generous plot, the proposed height, width, and resulting massing of the extensions would depart substantially from the modest character of No 26 B, creating an incongruous element of built form in a prominent position in the street scene. Whilst small elements of contrasting materials are present in nearby properties, the proposed extent of cladding would contrast with the otherwise consistent materials palette of the area, and would serve to highlight the unsympathetic scale of the large side extension in particular.

6. With regard to the substantial forward projection of the single-storey extension, I can see no particular benefit from creating an architectural 'bookend' in this position as suggested by the appellants; indeed, I find that with the road continuing on past 30 Ide Lane to the west, the creation of a visual 'bookend' would result in reduced legibility.
7. Moreover, whilst the appellants have sought to show that the front extension is related to existing building lines nearby, I do not consider that either example given provides a visually relevant building line in relation to the appeal site as viewed from the local area. The semi-detached dwellings from 16-26 Ide Lane follow a markedly different plot pattern, and the small, detached garage in the front garden of No 30 reads as an ancillary structure in the street scene, and not part of the main building. Therefore, whilst the retention of a large area of front garden would partially maintain the open setting at the front of the plot, the significant forward projection of the proposed extension would fail to respect the existing urban grain, resulting in an incongruous addition to the street scene.
8. The appellants also set out that the proposed extensions have been designed to ensure subservience with the host dwelling through material use and a first floor 'set back' from the front elevation. I also note that amendments were made during the application process which included reducing the forward extent of the single-storey front extension. Notwithstanding these efforts, by virtue of their height and massing, I do not consider that the proposals would maintain subservience to the host dwelling. Conversely, the extensions would engulf the original building, such that the main house would no longer be the dominant feature of the property.
9. Whilst the neighbouring house at No 26 A has a side extension with a considerable floor area, and whilst the developed area of that plot may be comparable to that of the appeal scheme, the limited forward projection of these elements has maintained the plot pattern and its contribution to the street scene. Importantly, the hipped roofed single-storey form of the extension at No 26 A clearly maintains subservience to the main house. The use of matching brick, fascia boards, and roof tiles also results in a cohesive appearance to the property. I therefore do not consider that the proposals before me would have a similar or comparable effect on the character and appearance of the street scene.
10. The appellants consider that the intensification of the site and the contemporary design of the proposals are appropriate in the context of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework), which at paragraph 130 does not discourage appropriate innovation or change (such as increasing densities). However, paragraph 130 also seeks to ensure that development is sympathetic to local character and maintains a strong sense of place. Moreover, paragraph 134 maintains that innovative designs must fit in with the overall form and layout of their surroundings.
11. Both parties have referred to the Council's Householder's Guide to Extension Design Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). This SPD recognises the impact residential extensions have on the character of an area, and seeks to amplify the development plan policies, encouraging high standards of design. For the reasons outlined above, I find that the proposed development would fail to accord with a number of the SPD's general principles, including retaining subservience, respecting the street scene, and the use of matching materials.

12. I therefore conclude that the development would result in harm to the character and appearance of the host property and the surrounding area. This would conflict with guidance in the SPD, and would be contrary to Objective 9 and Policy CP17 of the Exeter Core Strategy (the Core Strategy), and Saved Policy DG1 of the Exeter Local Plan (the Local Plan). Taken together these policies require, amongst other things, that the design, height, massing, and materiality of new development relates well to, complements, or enhances the local built context and character of the area.

Other Matters

13. In submitted correspondence between the appellants and the Council, a brief mention is made of the appellants' need for additional space at the appeal site, with a suggested fall-back position of vans being parked at the property. Such a fall-back position may be possible and realistic, but would generally not be within the control of planning, and in any event, would not result in the same degree of harm to the character and appearance of the host property or the surrounding area. The personal benefit of the development to the appellants, and the suggested fall-back, would therefore not outweigh the conflict I have found with the development plan.
14. I note the appellants' comment that they consider that both the Core Strategy and the Local Plan have been superseded by the more recent Framework. There is no evidence before me to indicate that a decision should be made other than in accordance with the development plan, and in addition, I have found conflict with the aims of the Framework. This has not therefore altered my overall decision.

Conclusion

15. For the reasons given above I find that the appeal proposal would conflict with the development plan when read as a whole. There are no material considerations that have been shown to outweigh that conflict or indicate a decision otherwise than in accordance with the development plan. Accordingly, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

K Jones

INSPECTOR