



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 7 November 2023

by Eleni Randle BSc (hons) MSc FRICS FAAV MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 14.11.2023

Appeal Ref: APP/X0415/D/23/3328896

63 Camp Road, Gerrards Cross, Buckinghamshire, SL9 7PF

- 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 Mrs Mansi Thakur against the decision of Buckinghamshire Council.
 - The application Ref PL/23/1735/FA dated 26 May 2023, was refused by notice dated 31 August 2023.
 - The development proposed is remodelling of existing house, including the demolition of an attached garage and erection of a two-storey front extension, first floor rear extension, single storey rear extension with balcony above, front porch, new roof with five front and five rear dormer windows, changes to doors, windows and external materials. Front wall, gates and adjustment to the highway access.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matters

2. I have utilised the Council's description of the development as per the decision notice as I feel it more concisely describes the development.
3. Since the determination of the application, and the submission of this appeal, a revised National Planning Policy Framework 2023 (the Framework) was adopted on 5 September 2023. The refusal reason generically references the Framework however, it is not considered that this impacts upon the determination of this appeal given the main changes to the Framework.

Main Issue

4. The main issue is the impact of the proposal upon the character and appearance of the locality.

Reasons

5. Camp Road consists of a private estate which is largely characterised by detached houses on large plots within an overall verdant setting. The area is designated as a Residential Area of Exceptional Character (RAEC) within the South Bucks District Local Plan – Consolidated September 2007 and February 2011 (LP). In addition to this, the Council's Townscape Character Study (TCS) specifically acknowledges that the variety of architecture is a distinctive characteristic of the area, with buildings generally well-integrated into the topography and that most houses are individual in their design with coherence being created as a result of the regular plot patterns and landscape character.

6. At the time of my site visit I noted that the dwellings within Camp Road are individually designed buildings and I also noted that there are examples of other Neo-Georgian houses which have been built within the vicinity, albeit in a sensitive manner in relation to their individual site context. Other examples of Neo-Georgian houses have, as a result of design, blended more comfortably into the general environment. It is only, realistically, as a result of my role that I noted this specific type of dwelling in the vicinity due to the assessment of the proposal before me within the context of the character and appearance of the locality as per the refusal reason.
7. The appeal site is a large, detached, house with form which is visually notable within the street scene. The existing form includes gables, dormer windows and Neo-Tudor detailing on the front elevation which is currently varied and not a straight line of uniform massing across all floors. The proposals before me would completely redesign the house in a proposed Neo-Georgian style and whilst, as outlined in the appellant's statement, it would retain some elements of the existing structure, it would go on to demolish others, including the garaging to the front of the site, as well as adding extensions. The new front elevation would include sash windows, balustrading to a portico entrance and multiple dormers with a high-level flat roof. Ultimately the existing dwelling would be unrecognisable).
8. I note, from the submissions before me, that the proposals are a re-design following dismissal of another appeal¹. The Council's delegated report summarises the material changes between the previous proposal and that which is now before me. The principle of a proposed Neo-Georgian architectural style would not, in itself, be inappropriate or out of character with the area, but the bulk and massing of the dwelling would significantly increase at first floor level with the eave height being raised by in excess of one and a half metres in comparison to an eave height which currently stands in line with that of 65 Camp Road. The resultant dwelling would be of significant width to the front elevation and would result in an unbroken, symmetrical, bulk and massing with a parapet wall at a height of in the region of 7.7 metres. This would be notably higher than neighbouring properties eaves and would bring built form forward of the existing to level off the overall front elevation adding to prominence of the proposals.
9. There is no attempt to break down the buildings massing. The existing front elevation of the property is currently broken up with gable projections which is a direct contrast to the proposal which would see a uniform building line, with the exception of the entrance portico, creating a visually more solid massing compared to the existing dwelling. This point is well demonstrated on the plan diagram on page 11 of the Design and Access Statement which identifies the walls to be retained, demolished, and newly built. The blue, being the retained walls, is shown in contrast to the new walls to the front elevation bringing bulk, scale, and massing forward in a solid building line towards the front elevation
10. I find the larger scale of the first floor would make the building look uncharacteristically bulky and large in the context of the appeal site when viewing within the street scene. At the time of my site visit I also noted that the appeal site stands on the outside of a bend where it is prominent in views from the street to the north and opposite albeit views in other directions would

¹ APP/N0410/D/23/3315604

be partly screened by an existing evergreen trees but, despite this, the lifetime of the development is likely to exceed that of the adjoining hedge. As a result of this if the hedge/trees was/were to be removed, or die, this would add further to the visual prominence of the proposal and make it a focal point, for all the wrong reasons, in a wide range of local views. Whilst it is plausible to condition retention of hedges in some cases, on this occasion I do not find that a condition is sufficient to make the proposal acceptable in planning terms given the other issues with general bulk, scale and massing outlined.

11. I note the appellant's statement addresses how they feel that the current proposals have responded to the points raised in the previous appeal. The planning decision for PL/23/1735/3L does, I find, fully take into account the changes made since the first application with the Council's report specifically listing the material changes before considering the proposal on its own merits as a new application. Such points include, for example (but not limited to) the removal of the dome and a design which is stated to be calmer and more akin to other Neo-Georgian properties in the area. Despite this, whilst I acknowledge there are other examples of Neo-Georgian houses in the area in the appeal site's location, which is visually prominent, I find the bulk, scale and massing introduced at first floor level combined with no break in the front elevation means the proposal would be overly dominant in the context of the street scene. Drawing 0360, included within the submissions, demonstrates height, width and massing but ultimately does not demonstrate a demonstrable reduction compared to the appeal which was previously dismissed (as can be seen from the proposed plan being overlayed with a blue line demonstrating the outline of the previously refused proposal).
12. I find that the proposal would stand as an alien construction within the street scene providing immediate contrast with nearby buildings even in the area where architectural variety is a valued aspect of local character. The proposal would result in overall unacceptable scale, bulk, mass, with dominant front and rear elevations, deep largely unbroken flank elevations, detailing and height of the parapet walls which would mean the proposal is beyond the limits of acceptable development as presented. This would be harmful to the area's designation as an RAEC.
13. The proposal, as submitted, is an unsympathetically designed anomaly which would unacceptably contrast with nearby buildings. The proposal would unacceptably harm both the character and appearance of the local area which would directly contrast with LP Policy EP3, which requires development to be in scale with the surrounding development and should not adversely affect the character of the locality in general, LP Policy H10 which outlines that within RAECs, proposals for residential development, including house extensions which would have an adverse effect on their exceptional character, will not be permitted and LP Policy H11 which requires that proposals to alter and extend existing residential dwellings will only be permitted where the extension would be integral to the dwelling and would harmonise with the existing building in terms of scale, height, form and design and the extension would not have an adverse impact on the character of the locality in general.
14. The proposal would also be contrary to South Bucks Local Development Framework Core Strategy Development Plan Document 2011 Policy CP8 which requires that all new development must be of a high standard of design and make a positive contribution to the character of the surrounding areas. The

proposal would also be contrary to Policy C1 of the National Design Guide and the Framework with their general objectives being to promote high quality design and prevent poor design which is out of character or scale with the surroundings with particular regard, in this case, to the appeal site being located within an RAEC.

Other Matters

15. I note third party comments and objections to the proposal. I have dealt with matters relating to bulk, mass and design within the main body of this decision notice. I note comments relating to neighbouring amenity with regard to privacy and overshadowing, however, the Council have raised no reasons for refusal based upon such matters and based upon the evidence before me I have no reason to conclude differently on such matters. Any potential for future proposals, such as garaging, would need to be considered on their own merits at the point of application.

Conclusion

16. For the reasons outlined above, and taking account all other matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Eleni Randle

INSPECTOR