



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 15 January 2024

by Chris Couper BA (Hons) Dip TP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 7th February 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/K0425/W/23/3322236

43 Walton Drive, High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire HP13 6TS

- 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 Shafiq Hussain against the decision of Buckinghamshire Council.
 - The application Ref 22/08085/FUL, dated 16 November 2022, was refused by notice dated 2 February 2023.
 - The development proposed is described as 'create a new rear extension, loft conversion, new porch and internal alterations to No 43 as well as demolition of existing annex and creation of attached 2 bed dwellinghouse on its place'.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area.

Background

3. The appellant states that the existing annex on the site has been 'occupied separately for some time'. However, as illustrated by the submitted drawings, it shares a front door with the main house and, as pointed out by the Council, it has not been established that it may be lawfully occupied as a separate dwelling. I have therefore considered this appeal on the basis that it, together with the rest of the house, currently form a single planning unit.

Reasons

Character and appearance

4. The appeal property is the last in a line of semi-detached two storey, principally hipped roofed dwellings on this side of Walton Drive, which are finished in a mix of red brickwork, tiles and render. To the east the dwellings have a different style and finish, with a gabled form and sections of horizontal boarding at first floor, but they are also overwhelmingly semi-detached, and laid out in a broadly similar pattern, with similar plot sizes.
5. The proposed extension to the side of No 43 would be set down at ridge level and would respect the original building's hipped roof and its facing materials. Given some nearby extensions to other semi-detached pairs, the resultant building's form would not appear markedly out of place.

6. However, unlike the existing annex which forms part of the same planning unit, the scheme would result in the subdivision of the plot to create a separate dwelling with its own entry porch, car parking spaces, and curtilage. That subdivision, and the resultant short terrace, would disrupt the coherent and consistent pattern and grain of semi-detached houses along this stretch of Walton Drive.
7. In the context of the area, the creation of two separate plots, which would be comparatively narrow, would also result in a cramped appearance. Given the site's prominent location on the outside of a curve in the road, those disruptive impacts would be clearly apparent in the streetscene. The proposed dwelling would also have a relatively short rear garden compared to most of those on this part of Walton Drive, but as that would only be apparent in some views from nearby properties, it would cause only very limited harm.
8. As the annex is a single storey structure, faced in matching materials and with a sloping roof to the front, it is subservient to, and broadly reflects the character of, the host. I do not therefore consider that this scheme would result in the replacement of an unsympathetic addition.
9. I observed that there are short terraces around 40 and 42 Walton Drive which appear to have resulted from extensions to previously semi-detached houses. However, whilst they are close to this site, they are on the opposite side of the highway, where they achieve a degree of symmetry by broadly mirroring each other on corner plots. I understand that those planning permissions pre-date the current development plan, and in any event, they are not typical of Walton Drive.
10. For these reasons the scheme would harm the character and appearance of the area. It would therefore conflict with Policies CP9 and DM35 of the Wycombe District Local Plan 2019. Amongst other things, and in general terms, these require development to improve the character of an area, retain existing positive characteristics, and to deliver a distinctive high quality sense of place.
11. It would also conflict with the advice in the Council's Residential Design Guidance Supplementary Planning Document 2017 that development should respond to local context and character, having regard to matters including plot patterns and sizes, building arrangements, and building types.

Other matters

12. In the scheme's favour, the site is located in an accessible urban area close to services and amenities, where the occupants would be likely to contribute to the local economy. It also finds support from some development plan policies and parts of the National Planning Policy Framework (December 2023) ('Framework') which require an efficient use of land, the use of previously developed land, and a boost to the supply of housing.
13. However, as this is a small scheme and only a single dwelling would be provided, its contribution to the Framework's social and economic objectives would be modest.

Conclusion

14. I have found that the scheme would harm the character and appearance of the area. Its modest benefits would not outweigh the harm that it would cause. Given the conflict with the development plan, and the environmental harm it would cause to this area's locally distinctive character, it does not benefit from the Framework's presumption in favour of sustainable development.
15. Consequently, having regard to all other matters raised, the appeal is dismissed.

Chris Couper

INSPECTOR