



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 30 January 2024

by **P. D. Biggers** BSc Hons MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 15.02.2024

Appeal Ref: APP/Q0505/D/23/3330930

75 Blinco Grove, Cambridge, Cambridgeshire CB1 7TX.

- 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 Gaillard against the decision of Cambridge City Council.
 - The application 23/02473/HFUL, dated 20 June 2023, was refused by notice dated 18 August 2023.
 - The development proposed is loft conversion with the raising of the existing ridgeline.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matters

2. In the period since the appeal was submitted the Government has published a revised version of the *National Planning Policy Framework* (the Framework). None of the changes are relevant to this appeal but I have used the paragraph referencing from the new Framework in my decision below.
3. The appellant, in submitting his appeal statement, requested that an alternative design of roof extension be considered in place of that submitted if the appeal proposal was deemed unacceptable. No formal drawings of this alternative proposal have been submitted and there is no evidence that it has been subject to formal neighbour consultation. As such, I cannot take this proposed alternative into account and have instead determined the appeal on the basis of the scheme which was before the Council.

Main Issue

4. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the host dwelling and its semi-detached neighbour and the surroundings on Blinco Grove.

Reasons

5. The appeal property sits on the north side of Blinco Grove and is part of a semi-detached pair of two storey, properties from the Victorian era. The front elevation of the semi-detached pair with its matching gabled bays is largely original and, apart from the front rooflights to No 77, is uniform in its appearance including the slate roofscape.
6. To the rear, the two properties both benefit from a symmetrical 2 storey rear extension and matching single storey offshoots with the result that there have been very significant additions to the two properties but in a way that was apparently designed to retain a symmetrical appearance to the rear.

7. Permission has already been granted (ref 23/00597/HFUL) for an 'L' shaped loft extension to No 75 incorporating a large box dormer covering the entire main roof slope and extending onto the rear outrigger extension but with the ridge of the main roof retained at the original height. The appeal proposal is for the same extension in terms of area but with an increase in height raising the ridge.
8. I have been referred to other properties in the area where property ridgelines have been raised to accommodate a box dormer which the appellants consider justifies the appeal proposal. I accept that the work ongoing at No 112, for example, appears to be raising the ridge on only part of a semi-detached pair but the effect of this and the effect of other ridge-raising extensions demonstrates the detrimental visual impact and I am not persuaded it justifies introducing the same arrangement into a uniform frontage on the semi-detached pair at Nos. 75 and 77. I will therefore determine the appeal proposal on its own merits.
9. Notwithstanding that the proposed dormer extension extending out onto the outrigger extension would have a significant adverse effect on the rear elevation of the semi-detached pair compared to the smaller dormer in place on No 77, I acknowledge that permission has been granted for a similar roof extension. This element of the proposal would therefore not be reason to dismiss the appeal. It is whether the additional harm from raising the roof would be of concern.
10. I accept that the increase in ridge height proposed to accommodate the loft accommodation would be achieved by projecting the roof slope higher above and behind the existing ridge and therefore minimising the impact on the plane of the front roof slope. Nevertheless, the increase in height compared to the neighbouring part of the semi-detached pair would still be readily visible from the opposite side of Blinco Grove and from views up and down the street in which it would appear as an incongruous addition to the uniform roofscape of the pair. In order to assist in the design of roof extensions the Council has produced *Appendix E Roof Extensions Design Guide* (REDG). With regard to ridge lines the guide states that, unless the street already lacks uniform roof heights or the ridge is not visible from the street, roof extensions that raise the ridge will not normally be supported. I have been invited to conclude that there is already variety in the roofscape of Blinco Grove in terms of heights but this is less the case in respect of the north side of the street, although I note that the semi-detached pairs on either side of the appeal property are slightly higher. Crucially, it is the effect on the semi-detached pair in question where there would be harm to the character and appearance of the uniform frontage and which would be visible from the street. Accordingly, the proposal would fail to observe this aspect of the roof extension guidance.
11. The Framework at paragraph 135 requires that developments must be sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment amongst other things and in these respects the proposal fails. Policy 55 of the Cambridge Local Plan (CLP) requires development to respond positively to its context and Policy 58, specifically controlling alterations and extensions to buildings, reflect the Framework in requiring that developments do not adversely impact on the appearance. Policy 58 goes on in respect of roof extensions and requires these to be sympathetic to the existing building and in keeping with the requirements of *Appendix E Roof Extensions Design Guide*. For the above reasons i.e. the scale and added height of the roof extension, the proposal would have an unacceptable impact on the character and appearance of the frontage to the semi-detached properties and the surroundings on Blinco Grove.

Other Matters

12. I understand the appellant's wish to make sustainable and effective use of housing land, an objective which is encouraged by the Framework in Section 11. I acknowledge that this national policy objective makes the principle of the development acceptable and is also supported by the CLP in increasing housing capacity in an area where new development is constrained. I also acknowledge the reason for the increased height of the ridge in order to obtain better internal room height. However, paragraph 128 in the same Section 11 of the Framework states that development should not be at the expense of maintaining an area's prevailing character and setting. Sustainable and effective use of the dwelling to provide the increased height roof extension would not therefore outweigh the harm to the character and appearance of the area as a result of the proposal. Moreover the property already benefits from permission for a rear dormer extension which could be implemented without increasing the height of the roof.

Conclusion

13. In reaching my decision I have had regard to the matters before me but for the reasons above the appeal should be dismissed.

P. D. Biggers

INSPECTOR