



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 15 May 2024

by M Bale BA (Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 21ST May 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/E3335/D/24/3342212

13 Chapel Hill, Ashcott, Bridgwater, Somerset TA7 9PY

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mrs Jade Chidgey against the decision of Somerset Council.
 - The application Ref is 01/23/00026.
 - The development proposed is two storey side extension with ground reduction for garage below.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issues in the consideration of this appeal are the effect of the development on the character and appearance of the area, and the living conditions of neighbouring residents.

Reasons

Character and appearance

3. Chapel Hill is a steeply rising street with a variety of building styles informally arranged on both sides. Most are detached and either older, relatively low two-storey, houses or bungalows. Despite the rising land, the scale of the houses and their informal arrangement means that the built form steps gradually up the street, with the buildings sitting comfortably on their plots and none appearing particularly dominant.
4. No 13 is one half of a semi-detached pair. It already has a greater presence in the street than most buildings due to the width of the pair and also because it is set at the level of the ground alongside its adjoining uphill neighbour. Consequently, the downhill end elevation of No 13 is unusually tall. There is currently a single storey lean-to garage alongside the downhill end of No 13 that visually breaks up the height of the end elevation and assists with the visual stepping from its lower neighbour.
5. The proposal, to extend on the downhill side, includes two floors of additional living accommodation at the existing ground and first floor level of the house. Making use of the topography, this would be built above an integral garage. However, visually, that would create a three-storey extension alongside the existing house. The resulting side elevation wall would be large and somewhat imposing and, being closer to the lower neighbour, would result in a building

that stepped up the hill far less subtly than the existing, increasing its presence in views up the street.

6. Moreover, while the building would retain an appropriate footprint relative to the size of the plot and use matching materials, when viewed from the front, the three-storey elevation would be in stark contrast to the smaller scale of the surrounding houses. It would appear as a large and bulky addition that would be uncharacteristic of the scale of surrounding buildings and the host pair of semi-detached dwellings. The incongruity would draw attention to the building in a way that other buildings do not, to the detriment of the established character and appearance of Chapel Hill.
7. My attention has been drawn to a recently constructed extension at 22 Ridgeway. This is a large addition relative to the size of the original house that has resulted in a very wide building. However, it is a two-storey addition to a two-storey house and so does not compete with its host dwelling in terms of height. It is also in a very different location as Ridgeway is a broadly flat road where other similarly proportioned houses sit alongside each other at a similar level. Therefore, Ridgeway does not influence the character and appearance of Chapel Hill nor inform an appropriate style for an extension at the appeal site.
8. There are other semi-detached pairs set at a high level on the broadly parallel School Hill, but while that road shares some characteristics with Chapel Hill, I did not see any examples of those similar dwellings having been extended in the manner proposed.
9. I, therefore, conclude that the proposal would harm the character and appearance of Chapel Hill. Such would be contrary to those aims of Policy D2 of the Sedgemoor Local Plan 2019 that seek to secure high quality design that responds positively to the identity of the surrounding area. It is unclear from the evidence whether the Ashcott Neighbourhood Plan has been made, as the document provided is headed 'draft'. Nevertheless, Policy 1 relating to design refers back to Policies of the LP. Compliance with the policy is, therefore, dependent on compliance with LP Policy D2 and so does not lead to a different conclusion, whatever the status of the Neighbourhood Plan.

Living conditions

10. While a large flank wall, with further lean-to front and rear projections, would face the lower neighbour, the extension would be broadly alongside the gable end wall of that neighbour, which would shield the outdoor areas from the greatest effects of the proposal. There are no facing windows in the closest part of the neighbouring house. Those that do face are small and some distance from the site.
11. The front windows of the extension would face the front windows of two houses on the opposite side of Chapel Hill. However, despite the relative height of the proposed windows and the extension itself, the houses on both sides of the road are set some distance back from the highway edge. There is no suggestion that any other neighbours would be adversely affected.
12. Given the above characteristics and relationships of the buildings, I find that there would be no harmful effects on the living conditions of any neighbouring

residents and no conflict with LP Policy D25 that seeks to protect these interests.

Other Matters

13. The proposal would intensify housing and residential density within an existing village, making an efficient use of land. It would bring some benefits to the local economy through the construction works and facilitating higher occupation. I understand that there may be some additional taxation receipts to the Council that could benefit local service provision generally. However, given the scale of the development, these benefits would be small and so of limited weight. There would also be direct benefits to the occupiers of No 13, including through the provision of enhanced living accommodation to better suit their needs and modern living standards, but these are largely personal benefits and so are also of limited weight.

Conclusion

14. While there would be no harm to the living conditions of neighbouring residents, the proposal would harm the character and appearance of the area. Such would result in a conflict with the development plan read as a whole. Planning decisions must be made in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. While the benefits may result in support from some policies of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework), my findings in respect of character and appearance are in conflict with those seeking to achieve good design in the built environment. For this reason, the policies of the Framework, taken as a whole, do not support the proposal.
15. No material considerations of sufficient weight, including those described above, have been advanced to warrant a decision otherwise than in accordance with the development plan.
16. Therefore, the appeal is dismissed.

M Bale

INSPECTOR