

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 4 June 2024

by R C Shrimplin MA(Cantab) DipArch RIBA FRTPI FCI Arb MCIL

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 11 July 2024

Appeal Reference: APP/K0425/D/24/3341397

2 Green Leys, Downley, High Wycombe HP13 5UH

- 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. G. Lines against the decision of Buckinghamshire Council.
 - The application (reference 23/08021/FUL, dated 2 December 2023) was refused by notice dated 5 February 2024.
 - The development proposed is described in the application form as a “single and two storey front and side extension”.
-

Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for a “single and two storey front and side extension”, at 2 Green Leys, Downley, High Wycombe HP13 5UH, in accordance with the terms of the application (reference 23/08021/FUL, dated 2 December 2023), subject to the conditions set out in the attached Schedule of Conditions.

Main issue

2. The main issue to be determined in this appeal is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the host building and its surroundings.

Reasons

3. Downley lies in the north-west part of High Wycombe, in a suburban location. The area is predominantly residential in character, characterised by detached and semi-detached houses in a meandering road layout. The underlying topography is hilly and the changes in levels create an interesting townscape.
4. Green Leys is a cul-de-sac off Sunnycroft, rising up from the access road and terminating in a loop around a grassy centre. The houses along the frontages are mainly semi-detached pairs of a conventional design, dating from the latter part of the twentieth century. It appears, however, that garages in the original layout have been replaced, in some cases, by two-storey side extensions. Such side extensions have generally been set back from the front elevations of the houses.

5. Number 2 Green Leys is a semi-detached house, paired with number 3 (which is very similar), with a shared pitched roof and constructed of brickwork with a tiled panel on the front elevation. A small single-storey flat-roofed porch area is attached to the front elevation. The property currently has a single-storey garage built up to the south (side) boundary, alongside the main part of the house, with a narrow path between the house and the garage. The adjoining house to the south is a detached house on a rather larger plot, sited lower down the hill. Although its materials and forms broadly follow those of other houses in the cul-de-sac, this house presents a large, gabled front elevation, unlike the appeal building.
6. It is now proposed to construct a two-storey side extension to number 2 Green Leys, extending forward of the front elevation, and to add a single-storey front extension across the remainder of the front elevation, to replace the existing entrance area and to extend the existing lounge.
7. The 'National Planning Policy Framework' emphasises the aim of "achieving well designed places" in the broadest sense (notably at Section 12), while making effective use of land and encouraging economic activity. It is aimed at achieving good design standards generally, by adding to the overall quality of the area and being visually attractive and sympathetic to local character and history (while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change). Nevertheless, it is also recognised that appropriate change may include increased densities.
8. Policies in the 'Wycombe District Local Plan' (which was adopted August 2019) also share these basic principles. In particular, Policy CP9 is concerned with "Sense of Place" and Policy DM35 with "Placemaking and Design Quality". More specifically, in relation to "Extensions and Alterations to Existing Dwellings", Policy DM36 includes provisions to achieve high quality design, respecting the character and appearance of the existing property and the surrounding area. Among other things, it includes the specific provision that extensions should be "subservient in scale and ancillary in function to the existing dwelling".
9. The Council's 'Householder Planning and Design Guidance Supplementary Planning Document' (which was adopted in January 2020) is also relevant but it does not have the force of the statutory Development Plan. In relation to proposed side extensions it includes a range of advice, including the specific proposition that such extensions should be subservient to, and set back from, the front elevation.
10. The proposed extensions would provide an additional bedroom and an en-suite bathroom at first floor level. On the ground floor, a small utility room would be added next to the extended kitchen, with an extension to the living room and a replacement garage.
11. The two-storey side extension would continue the ridge line of the main roof of the semi-detached pair but a two-storey forward projection would be added, to create a gabled feature on the front elevation that would intersect with the main roof slope but would be visually subsidiary to the larger roof. At ground floor level, a single storey element would be added across the remainder of the front elevation. The proposed side extension would be inset from the side

- boundary of the property, to leave a narrow path alongside it, providing access to the back garden.
12. The finished building would be asymmetric with its paired house and would occupy most of its own frontage. Nevertheless, the design would introduce an interesting front elevation, at the end of a series of semi-detached properties and adjacent to the gabled elevation at number 1 Green Leys. The new features would vary the original basic design but, in making use of common materials and appropriate designs, without being overly insistent or intrusive.
 13. The new extension would increase the density of development in the cul-de-sac but it would be in harmony with the existing streetscene. I have formed the opinion that the scheme would achieve a good standard of design even though the extension would not be set back. I am persuaded that considering the finished design in its context, the proposed development would not harm the character and appearance of the host building or its surroundings but, on the contrary would add to the quality of the setting.
 14. The appeal scheme would provide useful additional space in the house and would, thereby, add to the stock of residential accommodation in the locality, albeit in a very limited way. I have concluded that the project would not be in conflict with the aims of achieving good standards of architectural design and thus would not conflict with national policies or with the Development Plan when read as a whole.
 15. In short, I am persuaded that the scheme before me is acceptable in planning terms and, although I have considered all the matters that have been raised in the representations, I have found nothing to cause me to alter my decision.
 16. I have, however, also considered the need for conditions and, in imposing conditions, I have taken account of those suggested by the Council in the usual way (without prejudice to their main arguments in the appeal). In particular, I have concluded that conditions are necessary, to define the planning permission and to ensure that quality is maintained.
 17. I have also included a condition to encourage biodiversity, for the reasons that have been put forward by the Council.

Roger C. Shrimplin

INSPECTOR

SCHEDULE OF CONDITIONS

1. The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this decision.
2. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved drawings:
 - drawing number GSL/01/23 (Existing & Proposed Elevations / Floor Plans);
 - drawing number GSL/02/23 (Location Plan, Block Plan).
3. The materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of the development hereby permitted shall match those used in the existing building.
4. Prior to the occupation of the development hereby permitted two bird boxes shall be attached to a building on site, in a position suitable for their intended purpose, and thereafter retained for the lifetime of the development.