

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 9 October 2024

by Andrew Dale BA (Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 24 October 2024

Appeal Ref. APP/Q0505/D/24/3349659

36 Grantchester Road, Newnham, Cambridge CB3 9ED

- 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 Mr Andrew Jackson against the decision of Cambridge City Council.
 - The application ref. is 24/01134/HFUL.
 - The development proposed is a single storey side and rear extension.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Application for costs

2. An application for a full award of costs was made by Mr Andrew Jackson against Cambridge City Council. This application is the subject of a separate Decision.

Main issue

3. The main issue is the impact of the proposed development upon the character and appearance of the dwelling and its surroundings.

Reasons

4. Dating from the Edwardian period, no. 36 is a 2-storey end-terraced house. It is positioned on a prominent corner plot at the junction between Grantchester Road and Fulbrooke Road. The surroundings are residential in character.
 5. The 2-storey gable end of no. 36 faces Fulbrooke Road, being separated from the footway there by a narrow side garden about 1.5m wide. There is also a long rear-projecting original 2-storey outrigger shared across the party wall with no. 34, the side of which is stepped in from the opposite side boundary to Fulbrooke Road behind paved hardstanding and well back from the line of the 2-storey gable end. The outrigger has been extended rearwards over 2 storeys. A single storey side and rear extension wraps around the end of the extended outrigger. This is also set back about 1.5m from the boundary line on Fulbrooke Road behind a paved path.
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6. The proposal is to add a ground floor side/rear extension which would reach across the full depth of the 2-storey outrigger, at the same time as adapting and widening the existing single storey side and rear extension and overlapping part of the 2-storey gable end. The continuous outer wall of the new extension would have a total length of about 12.5m and would be set off the back of the footway on Fulbrooke Road by only a nominal amount making it both a boundary wall and house wall. It would have a single pitched roof hipped at each end although the forwardmost hip would be curtailed at the corner of the 2-storey gable end. In terms of site coverage, it would infill the paved hardstanding, paved path and a very small part of the soft planted area next to the 2-storey gable end.
7. The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) advises that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development. So, development should: add to the overall quality of the area; be visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping; sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting; and establish or maintain a strong sense of place. I consider that the appeal proposal is ill-judged in these important respects.
8. In general physical terms, the proposed single-storey addition would not threaten the locally distinctive 2-storey terraced built form or overdevelop the plot as a whole, as adequate garden/amenity space would remain available for occupiers in the long rear garden. Furthermore, in direct head-on views of the front of the property from Grantchester Road, the extension would be well set back from the front building line and not appear visually intrusive for any reason in those views.
9. Even so, I consider that an important quality to this area's local distinctiveness is the fairly open and pleasant aspect to the street scene in close proximity to the junction. The open land at the side of the appeal property, viewing the paved path, hardstanding and soft planted strip together, contributes to that spatial quality. Corner plots like this are often of particular importance because of their heightened prominence from public vantage points. This side of the house is indeed highly prominent in the public realm. The extension proposed would be a step in the wrong direction. In taking up so much of the space at the side of the house and being sited virtually on the footway boundary, it would noticeably and detrimentally erode the spacious vistas to the street scene on both approaches along Fulbrooke Road and in some views from Grantchester Road across the junction.
10. Moreover, especially when viewing the rear of the proposed development from Fulbrooke Road, the cumulative impact with previous development would be apparent. The proposed ground floor extension when combined with the earlier single storey extension would have considerable mass, being wider than the existing property. This would overly intensify the quantum of built form and fill the width of the plot almost entirely over a considerable distance. The scale of the extension would be such that it would appear as a dominant addition and in doing so would not be consistent with the form and scale of the existing property. To that extent, there would be overdevelopment of this side of the property.
11. This harm would be compounded by the use of a shallow pitched and asymmetrical roof that would awkwardly overlap the gable end and by the fact that the long wall of the new side elevation would be unbroken thereby displaying a featureless and

imposing form of development on the highway edge. Opportunities for appropriate and effective landscaping would be extremely constrained by the lack of space and any such landscaping that may be possible (like climbing plants) would do little to soften the expanse of built form along the highway boundary. I do not accept the appellant's suggestion that the design would improve upon the existing fenestration in the side and rear walls of no. 36. The fenestration in the side of the main outrigger, being picked out by red brick arched heads, is rather attractive. The insertion of numerous windows to allow for the penetration of light was typical of the Edwardian design idiom. The rationalisation of the rear fenestration is noted but this would be somewhat undermined by having a wide glazed set of doors that would reach beyond the line of the main gable end.

12. That the scheme would not relate positively to its context would be brought into sharp relief with comparisons to the layout of 38 Grantchester Road, the partner property on the opposite side of the road junction. There has been a ground floor side extension here but it is set back about 1.5m from the roadside boundary where there is a low boundary wall with a trellis, partly covered with vegetation, above. Accordingly, that extension does not have a dominating impact. Rather, it successfully addresses the corner plot location by resulting in a smoother, less abrupt transition to the Fulbrooke Road street scene and retaining an appropriate garden boundary.
13. By reason of the proposed extension's prominence, its significant expanse of built form following the boundary with the footway, its excessive width and lateral spread across the side elevation of the house and the elimination of a garden boundary that could otherwise be attractively defined and landscaped, I consider that the proposed development would be a visually intrusive feature which would seriously detract from the character and appearance of the house and mar the streetscape hereabouts. Although it is intended to utilise matching external materials, this would not overcome the adverse effects that I have described.
14. I saw 35 Grantchester Road which was undergoing significant extension works. The rear single storey extension there is sizeable but it is set back from the timber boundary fence along Selwyn Road and is viewed as part of the Selwyn Road street scene which for the most part is characterised by modest 19th century terraced houses built up to the footway. No. 35 is not visually linked to the Fulbrooke Road street scene where the context is, in any event, different. Where fences form the boundary with the footways, it is often a fairly standard response to providing privacy on a corner plot, such as at 33 and 38 Grantchester Road. I could not detect any local extension project identical to what is proposed under this appeal. In the evidence put before me, there are no binding local precedents for the appeal scheme which I have determined on its own site-specific merits.
15. Drawing these threads together, I consider that the proposed extension would not represent a visually attractive solution that would add to the overall quality of the area. It would not be sufficiently respectful of or complementary to the existing building's character and form, the local character and street scene and the context of the site. I therefore find on the main issue that the proposed development would harm the character and appearance of the dwelling and its surroundings in conflict with the aims of Policies 55, 56, 58 and 59 of the Cambridge Local Plan 2018. These policies seek to ensure that development responds positively to its context,

while creating successful places through high quality design and that any alteration or extension is carefully designed, with importance being attached to external spaces, landscape, public realm and boundary treatments.

16. There would not be compliance with the key design themes in the Framework insofar as they relate to achieving well-designed and beautiful places. The scheme may fulfil the social objective of sustainable development as set out in the Framework by providing more internal living space at ground floor level and offer a limited economic benefit to the building trade, but the environmental objective would not be fostered given the harm I have found under the main issue.
17. The Council, correctly in my view, did not identify an excessive loss of amenity for neighbouring properties for any reason or any insurmountable problems in relation to highway safety and parking. The lack of harm in these respects does not outweigh the harm I have found under the main issue.

Conclusion

18. I have given careful consideration to the grounds of appeal but have read nothing to alter my finding on the main issue which is decisive to the outcome of this appeal. There is conflict with the development plan. The harm cannot be mitigated by the imposition of planning conditions and it is not outweighed by other material considerations. For the reasons given above and taking into account all other matters raised, including within the letters of representation for and against the application from third parties, I conclude that this appeal should not succeed.

Andrew Dale

INSPECTOR