

DELEGATED DECISION REPORT

SMD/2024/0350
Valid 30/07/2024

34 PRIORY AVENUE
LEEK

SINGLE STOREY FRONT
EXTENSION AND
ALTERATIONS

(FULL - HOUSEHOLDER)

MAIN ISSUES

- Design

DESCRIPTION OF SITE

Semi-detached two-storey brick and tile gable-ended dwelling typical of one of the range of styles that characterise this period housing scheme from the mid 20th century well known in Leek as the Haregate Estate.

The dwelling has visual prominence in the street scene as it is the last in the row at the west end of Priory Avenue and the gable end for example is seen strongly from the surroundings to the junction of Priory Avenue and Haregate Road with which it joins. At the time of this assessment the property was somewhat secluded by a mixed privet and leylandii hedge which was shrouding the ground floor frontage. The attached neighbour at 33 has at some point formed a gated car pull-in to the front garden making that property open to the road front and in turn ensuring some street scene visibility to the frontage of no.34 from the east.

The two semi-detached dwellings together present a striking conformity and cohesion of simple yet pleasing design in which a frontage groundfloor canopy runs the full length of the two dwellings – see Fig.1 below. The canopy is supported by a series of six attractively styled identical brackets (three per dwelling) and is roofed in consistent clay tiles for its full length. There are some minor differences between the two dwellings in some of the window frame designs used for the glazing inserts but the wall openings follow a symmetrical arrangement across the two property fronts retaining their original sizing. In the case of no.33 a bay framed window has been substituted for the front lounge window but this is neatly over-sailed by the canopy and discretely contained within the canopy dimensions without projecting beyond the canopy limits.

The existing canopy projects approximately 0.8m. The top height of the roof slope against the house wall (the lean-to point) is at c.2.8m metres.



Fig.1

PROPOSAL

The main elements of the proposal involve a front lean-to extension to the groundfloor living accommodation of no. 34 and the application of a render wall finish over the existing brick front elevation at first floor level above the proposed extension. The scheme plans as submitted also include the proposed insertion of two rooflights in the front roof slope of the main dwelling.

Proposed materials for the lean-to extension are bricks “to complement [the] existing property” and “plain clay tiles to match existing”.

White uPVC fascia and soffit board to match existing. Black uPVC half-round gutters with circular downpipes on fixings and brackets to match existing.

Existing white windows to be replaced with a new uPVC casements finished in grey.

The lean-to extension would have an eaves height comparable to the existing canopy but the lean-to point against the main house wall would be at a higher point of c.3.6 metres. The bulk of the extension would project c.1.3 metres. At the left end adjacent to the attached neighbour there would be an additional open timber porch with forward projecting gable. The porch element would project 2.0m.

BNG

As a householder application the proposal is exempt from any need to meet the new biodiversity net gain (BNG) requirements introduced in 2024.

RELEVANT LOCAL AND NATIONAL PLANNING POLICIES

Local Plan (adopted 9th September 2020)

- SS1 Development Principles
- SS2 Settlement Hierarchy
- SS5 Leek Area Strategy
- DC1 Design Considerations
- NE1 Biodiversity and Geological Resources
- NE2 Trees, Woodland and Hedgerows
- T1 Development and Sustainable Transport

National Planning Policy Framework (Dec 2023)

Paragraph(s) 1 – 14;

Section(s) 4 – Decision making; 6 – Building a strong and competitive economy; 7 – Ensuring the vitality of town centres; 8 Promoting healthy and safe communities; 11 – Making effective use of land; 12 – Achieving well designed places and beautiful places; 15 – Conserving and enhancing the natural environment; 16 – Conserving and enhancing the historic environment.

Adopted Supplementary Planning Documents/Guidance (SPD/G):

- Space About Dwellings SPG
- Design Principles SPG
- Design Guide SPD adopted 21st February 2018

Local Plan Supporting Evidence Documents:

- Landscape and Settlement Character Assessment (2008)

SITE HISTORY / RELEVANT PREVIOUS APPLICATIONS

None

CONSULTATIONS

Publicity

Site Notice expiry date: 04.09.2024

Neighbour consultation period ends: 21.08.24

Press Advert: N/A

Public Comments

One representation has been received which is from a resident of 24 Horsecroft Crescent which backs on to 34 Priory Avenue and who comments: "No objections, will not affect us at all".

Town / Parish Comments

Leek Town Council: At a meeting of Leek Town Council Planning Committee on 20th August, the Town Council resolved to have no objection to this application, but to ask for the building inspectors to check the dimensions are within the allowed extension regulations. There are no objections from members of the public, so the Council agreed that the proposal is not un-neighbourly.

OFFICER COMMENTS

Principle of Development

The dwelling is within the Leek Town Development boundary where development in principle is acceptable. The main issues with this proposal are the design appearance and in particular the relationship of the proposed front extension to the host dwelling and to the attached neighbour. The fact the extension reaches forward of the front-most elevation of the property means this is not an alteration that can be carried out under Permitted Development. There are in addition issues affecting street scene. The proposed roof lights on the main front roof slope to the existing dwelling could be carried out under Permitted Development (PD) rights.

Design

The effect of the proposal would be to entirely disrupt the strong sense of design simplicity and cohesion across the frontage of this pair of semis.

The character of these dwellings comes from the simplicity of the frontage. It is also to be noted that it is a characteristic of the Haregate Estate and exemplified in Priory Avenue that a range of repeating house designs have been alternated throughout the estate. Similar dwellings to nos 33 and 34 occur for example at 19 to 24 Priory Avenue but it can be noted that at least two other dwelling types occur on this side of the avenue in nos 29 to 32 and nos 25 and 26. None exhibit front extensions of the form or scale in this proposal but appear little altered from their original form and taken together all combine to present a homogeneity in their overall modest simplicity.

The porch and front extension would clash awkwardly with the retained canopy section over the attached neighbouring dwelling. By its additional height and projection the extension would be overly dominant and unbalancing to the current arrangement. The oak framed porch with its echoes of a much earlier architectural era is wholly out of character and unduly fussy for these modest 1950's dwellings and further unbalances the scheme both in style and proportion.

With regard to the proposed addition of cream render finish at first floor front this introduces a material not present in the existing property and is therefore an alteration that would not comply with GPDO(2015) Schedule 2 Part 1 condition A.3 (a) and therefore requires planning permission.

It is part of the pattern of dwelling styles comprising the Haregate Estate that some use render in part and others are entirely brick and this variety in the street scene is evident in the alternation of styles found in Priory Avenue. This places an added importance to the retention of brick finishes where they occur. It would be particularly disruptive to introduce a patchwork of materials within the single pair of dwellings where design consistency has been firmly established both for these specific dwellings as well as more generally for this estate as a whole.

Based on the agent's annotated notes the LPA interprets the plans as proposing render to the first floor front only and not the entirely brick two storey gable elevation. This if it were proposed would add a further significant intervention in the street scene which would further undermine the deliberate alternation of designs characterising the wider Haregate housing environment.

Although at the time of the LPA site visit a well grown front garden boundary hedge was present and shrouding the property this could at any time be trimmed back or even removed and it is considered important to hold this in mind when determining the implications of this proposal on the street scene.

Policy and Guidance

The Council's adopted design policy DC1 is that: "All development shall be well designed and reinforce local distinctiveness by positively contributing to and complementing the special character and heritage of the area in line with the Council's Design Guide SPD. In particular, new development should [from the first two of a series of 11 points]:

1. be of a high quality and add value to the local area, incorporating creativity, detailing and materials appropriate to the character of the area;
2. be designed to respect the site and its surroundings and promote a positive sense of place and identity through its scale, height, density, layout, siting, landscaping, character and appearance;

The adopted design SPD (2018) considers alterations and extensions at section 5 and advises at 5.2:

"Alterations need to be undertaken with care. Insensitive changes can easily spoil a building. The key to a sensitive approach is to take note of what is there already before preparing the design and to work with and not against the building's character (accurate survey drawings are essential in this respect). The aim should be to revitalise the building without altering its fundamental character."

At 5.5 the guidance advises:

"All extensions should harmonise with the parent building. An extension should respect the dominance of the original building and be subordinate to it in terms of its size and massing. Setting back the new section from the building line and keeping the eaves and ridge lower than the parent building will help."

Porches are specifically considered at 5.9:

"Porches must be appropriate to the property and well designed. They rarely look right on small cottages and often spoil terraced properties. They detract

from the basic simplicity of such buildings. In these cases, an internal porch is the better solution.”

The Council’s adopted Design Principles SPG specifically advises at point 4 page 2.4 that “Generally speaking it will not be acceptable to extend in front of or along the building line, unless design benefits accrue and neighbours are not disadvantaged.”

At page 2.9 under Materials, section 6 says that “When considering extensions the aim should be to match the existing wall and roof materials...”

Amenity

No adverse impacts for householder amenity or ‘living conditions’ have been identified such as for the attached neighbour at no. 33 although there must be concern that the alteration to the canopy could not be carried out without interfering with the neighbour’s property. There is no certificate B with the application to say that the neighbour has been served notice of the development application that affects their property.

CONCLUSION / PLANNING BALANCE

The proposal is found unacceptable owing primarily to the design, scale and form and is especially problematic as a front extension where it risks prominence in the street scene. The agent was advised at an early stage that the scheme could not be supported. They suggested the application of render over the brick work would be PD and asked if omission of the porch addition would make the scheme acceptable. As set out in the above report the use of render is found to be an alteration that cannot be Permitted Development in this dwelling as it is not a similar material to any in the existing building. Retaining the brick finishes is found important here in order to maintain the existing design rationale of the building and maintain the harmony of the appearance both in the application building and with its attached neighbour.

The LPA could not agree that the omission of the porch element would make the scheme acceptable and no amendment was received.

Given the high degree of retained symmetry and cohesion of the existing design frontage in the application building and its attached neighbour and given the abrupt differences in height and projection that would arise between the extension and the existing canopy (as would be retained in the attached dwelling) the proposal is found insensitive to and at odds with the existing established design character of the property. The key characteristic is a relatively plain but not unattractive simplicity to which an existing canopy has been successfully added making a very light and complementary addition. The proposed alternative addition is out of proportion to the host dwelling and makes an unduly heavy and unbalancing extension to this frontage. The inclusion of open exposed timber framing to form a porch and introduction of render over the first floor brick front elevation combine to further complicate the scheme. The proposal is therefore found contrary to Local Plan

policies SS1; SS5 and DC1 supported by adopted design SPD (2018) and earlier SPG (1996) and to the NPPF (Dec 2023) in particular section 12.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATION : REFUSE

Case Officer: Arne Swithenbank

Recommendation Date: 24/09/2024

X *B.J. Haywood*

Signed by: Ben Haywood

On behalf of Staffordshire Moorlands District Council