
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 28 November 2016

by P W Clark MA MRTPI MCMI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government

Decision date: 8 December 2016

Appeal Ref: APP/L5240/D/16/3160374
102 Coulsdon Road, Coulsdon CR5 2LB

- 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 Prasad and Thushari Gunawardena against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Croydon.
 - The application Ref 16/02682/P, dated 16 April 2016, was refused by notice dated 21 July 2016.
 - The development proposed is to raise existing roof to match the adjoining property (Nº 104 Coulsdon Road), loft conversion including construction of a dormer to the rear side of the property and replace hip roof with gable end (to the north-west) to support the roof and ground floor extension to the rear side of the property by 3m from existing outer wall.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural matter

2. In figures 11 and 12 of the grounds of appeal, supplemented by drawings in Appendix D, the appellants canvass alternative designs for the proposed extension. It is for the Council to consider these in the first instance. As these alternatives have not been first considered by the Council, I am unable to take them into account in relation to this appeal.
3. There are some minor inaccuracies in the submitted drawings. For example, the windows in the front and rear elevation of the adjoining property are incorrectly shown as lining through with those of the proposal whereas in fact the floor, ceiling, cill and lintel levels of the ground floor would still step down between the two properties in response to topography even though the roof would be raised to line through. The drawings of the proposed side and rear elevation underrepresent the degree to which the ground falls away at the rear of the property so that, in practice, if allowed, the extension would have a much larger extent of retaining wall exposed to view. Neither of these minor inaccuracies prevent me from reaching an understanding of the effects of what is proposed.

Reasons

4. The sole issue in this appeal is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the building in the street scene. Coulsdon Road runs for a great length up the side of a valley leading to the North Downs and, as the appellants
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point out, does not consistently comprise bungalows. But, numbers 78-110 (even) on the west side of the road are all hipped-roofed bungalows. They lie below the road and so their roofscape is highly visible. Many of them share a common form in which wings project forward from the outer ends of paired semi-detached bungalows. In the case of the appeal site and two other pairs, these wings have gabled ends decorated with black timbering. To accommodate the steeply sloping topography, number 102 is stepped down from its attached neighbour.

5. The proposal is in three parts. One is a single storey flat-roofed extension, 3m deep, extending across the full width of the rear elevation. This is uncontroversial but there is no suggestion that it could or would be constructed independently of the second element and so I have not entertained a split decision but have determined the appeal as a single proposal.
6. The second element is an increase in the height of the bungalow's elevations so that the eaves and ridge line of the roof are raised to align with those of its attached neighbour. The Council raises no objection to this element of the proposal and I too find it unobjectionable but it would be inseparable from the third element and so falls to be considered as a whole.
7. The third element would be to add a flat-roofed tile-hung dormer extending across all but 0.6m of the rear elevation, wrapping around the side and projecting forwards along about two-thirds of the length of the side elevation. For approximately the foremost one-third of its side projection it would be topped by two small roof slopes ending in a tiled gable representing a projection of the raised roof of the original house sideways over the front part of the side elevation of the dormer.
8. The appellants point out that the proposal is based upon a design for a flat-roofed wrap-around dormer which has a certificate of lawfulness as permitted development. But it is a mistake to conclude that the Council has approved this or any other proposal in the neighbourhood which falls within the definition of permitted development. It has not, it has merely certified the facts of the matter.
9. Permitted development is subject to limitations, in this case, limitations both of size and of position. Those limitations are intended to ensure that however ungainly or unsightly such permitted development may be, its harm would be limited. But the appellants have found that those limitations prevent the achievement of the quantity of accommodation they seek and so a much larger proposal is submitted. Considerations of character and appearance then apply.
10. Unfortunately, in contrast to the scheme allowed on appeal at number 98 Coulsdon Road (appeal reference APP/L5240/D/14/2226646), the ungainliness of the certificated permitted development would be retained and exaggerated in the current appeal proposal. Whereas the dormer in the certificated scheme was set back from the rear and side eaves of the roof, leaving a clearly visible 0.4m of the original roof at eaves level, the extension in the current appeal would rise in line with both elevations and so would be substantially more bulky, losing much of the characteristics of a dormer. Yet, instead of being treated as a vertical extension of the facades and faced in matching materials as is the side extension at number 98, it would still be treated as though it were a dormer recessed into the roof and faced in tiles.

11. The side extension in the certificated scheme would have had a length of 5.8m, positioned towards the rear of the side roof slope, leaving about 5m in length of the original roof slope exposed to view. This, together with the residual roof slope beneath the set-back dormer would have allowed the original form of the roof to be appreciated and would have expressed the extension as somewhat large but still a dormer set within a roof slope.
12. The raised roof of the current proposal would result in the extension projecting much further forward, leaving a length of about 3.75m of the original roof. Its greater sideways projection would leave a barely noticeable fringe of tiles along the line of the eaves. In combination the appearance would no longer be that of a dormer subservient to a roof slope but would be that of a first floor extension with a cumbersome form rising at the rear of the side wing of the bungalow. Topping it with a sideways extension of the heightened main roof does little to disguise its ungainliness. Because of the position of the appeal premises below the level of the public road, all these effects would be that much more noticeable, as previously remarked.
13. I conclude that the proposal would be detrimental to the appearance of the existing building and harmful to the character of the street in which tiled roof slopes predominate. It would be contrary to the requirements of policies 7.1(B) and (D), 7.4(B) and 7.6(B) of the London Plan 2011 which call for developments to interface with surrounding land, reinforce and enhance the character of the neighbourhood, have regard to the pattern and grain of existing development in terms of proportions and massing and complement the local architectural character. It would be contrary to policies SP1.2a and 4.1 of the Croydon Local Plan Strategic Policies adopted in April 2013 which require development to respond to and enhance local character (though I do not find it to be contrary to policy 4.2 which requires development to be informed by local topography). It would also conflict with saved policy UD2(i) of the Croydon Unitary Development Plan adopted in July 2006 which requires development to reinforce and respect the existing development pattern. I therefore dismiss the appeal.

P. W. Clark

Inspector