
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 15 December 2016

by D Cramond BSc MRTPI

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

Decision date: 22 December 2016

Appeal Ref: APP/L3625/D/16/3160484

17 The Crossways, Mersthem, Redhill RN1 3NA

- 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 & Mrs M Plank against the decision of Reigate & Banstead District Council.
 - The application Ref 16/01694/HHOLD, dated 18 July 2016, was refused by notice dated 13 September 2016.
 - The development proposed is the demolition of the existing garage and the construction of a 2 storey side extension including a front facing dormer and associated works.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for the demolition of the existing garage and the construction of a 2 storey side extension including a front facing dormer and associated works at 17 The Crossways, Mersthem, Redhill RN1 3NA in accordance with the terms of the application Ref 16/01694/HHOLD, dated 18 July 2016, subject to the following conditions:
 1. The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than three years from the date of this decision.
 2. 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.
 3. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: MP.P.001 & MP.P.002.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the host property and the locality.

Reasons

Character and appearance

3. The appeal property is a visually agreeable semi-detached two storey dwelling with a cat slide roof and a projecting gable. The established residential neighbourhood is characterised by a mix of detached and semi-detached residential properties of varied type and design which come together to form an area of pleasing suburban appearance. The appeal proposal is as described above.
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4. The Council cites conflict with policies Ho9, Ho13 and Ho16 of the Borough local Plan 2005 (LP) and the Householder Extensions and Alterations Supplementary planning Guidance (SPG). In broad terms, taken together and amongst other matters, these call for suitably scaled high quality design of development sympathetic to a site's wider setting and ensuring protection of local distinctiveness and character generally along with the aesthetics of the host property.
5. It is clear from the submitted material that the key concerning factor stems from the proximity that would arise between the planned extension and the side boundary with its adjacent two storey home. The argument is put that with less than 1metre being retained from the shared boundary with 15 The Crossways, a terracing effect would be created that would be detrimentally harmful to the character and visual appearance of the streetscene and result in a cramped appearance with the dwelling filling the plot. The 1 metre marker stems from amplification text alongside policy Ho13 and guidance within the SPG which in both cases refer to the need for this gap, *normally*.
6. Setting aside the issue of the gap, I would agree with the Council that this scheme would not be harmful to residential amenity and would have "many positive and attractive features, including the extension of the cat-slide roof which continues the existing roof pitch and form, the neat attractively designed dormer and use of matching materials" (Officer Report). It would also bring discernible benefit to the Appellants by way of improved and increased accommodation. Given the nature of the extension, and its air of subordination, I would not be concerned over the matter of the symmetry of the semi-detached pair.
7. In this street most, but certainly not all, dwellings have a marked gap between their upper levels and it would not be unreasonable to start any assessment from this point. However the design of the host property is very unusual in that the cat slide roof which is planned to be continued starts above the ground floor accommodation which means that there is a gradual increase upwards to a full two storey height, well behind the main front wall of the neighbouring home. This is very different from the usual more strident two storey vertical elevation one would normally encounter and would have to assess on a side-to-side basis. It is a much more 'subtle' situation.
8. The site would not look cramped despite the fact that use would be made of its width. The visual situation is further aided by the fact that the host property has its main front elevation a little behind the neighbouring property. Finally, the alignment of the road is also beneficial in that the proximity of the two dwellings at their upper level, in the set-back position, will only be publicly discernable from a very limited stretch of the highway. In my opinion it would be unnecessary in this instance to apply the *normal* 1 metre measurement for an upper level gap; a pragmatic approach would be reasonable. There would not be aesthetic or other harm to the host property or the wider area from the appeal scheme proceeding.
9. Given all of the above I conclude that the appeal scheme would not run contrary to the policies I refer to in paragraph 5 and furthermore, there would not be conflict with the objectives of the SPG which reflects these policy aims and in any event could not be expected to cover every situation.

Conditions

10. The Council suggests the standard commencement condition along with the requirement for materials to match the existing building. I agree this latter condition would be appropriate in the interests of visual amenity. I also agree that there should be a condition that works are to be carried out in accordance with listed, approved, plans as this provides certainty.

Overall conclusion

11. For the reasons given above I conclude that appeal proposal would not have unacceptable adverse effects on the character and appearance of the host property and the locality. Accordingly the appeal is allowed.

D Cramond

INSPECTOR