
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 4 January 2017

by Elaine Gray MA(Hons) MSc IHBC

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

Decision date: 25 January 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/D5120/D/16/3159973

11 Westwood Lane, Welling DA16 2HG

- 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 Roberts against the decision of Council of the London Borough of Bexley.
 - The application Ref 16/01836/FUL, dated 18 July 2016, was refused by notice dated 16 September 2016.
 - The development proposed is demolition of existing detached bungalow and construction of 2 three bedroom semi-detached houses.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the surrounding area, and on the living conditions of neighbouring occupants, with particular regard to outlook and sunlight.

Reasons

Character and appearance

3. The appeal site at 11 Westwood Lane is located within a predominantly residential area, and comprises the last of a row of similar bungalows on the east side of Westwood Lane. The development would replace the existing building with a pair of two storey semi-detached dwellings.
 4. The main roof of No 11 is pyramidal in form, and it appears that the neighbouring bungalows to the north were originally built in a similar style. I accept that a number of these properties have had alterations carried out to the roofs, thus departing from their original shape. However, I observed on my site visit that, even where the roofs have been substantially enlarged, the end hipped forms have been retained.
 5. To the south of the appeal site, the scale changes to two storey dwellings arranged in semi-detached pairs, with hipped roofs and central chimneys. Again, a number of these properties have had alterations carried out. My attention has been drawn to 13 Westwood Lane, which has been extended to the side. Whilst the extension terminates with a blank parapet wall, its roof, which is set down from the main roof, still retains the hipped end which is characteristic of the main house. Further along, at 17 Westwood Way, is a
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similar side extension whose roof has a gabled end. However, this extension remains subordinate to the main hipped roof of the dwelling. I therefore conclude that gabled roofs are in the minority, and that hipped roofs remain characteristic of the majority of this part of Westwood Lane, contributing significantly to the local aesthetic of the area. By contrast, the proposed dwellings would have gabled roofs, resulting in an uncharacteristic roof shape which would be at odds with the prevailing architectural style in the area.

6. In terms of layout, the existing bungalow is set in from the side boundaries of the property by a narrow walkway to the north, and a garage to the south. Whilst I accept that the garage itself steps out to the boundary, its low height allows the original spatial separation between No 11 and the boundary to be perceptible at roof level. The hipped roofs of No 11 and the neighbouring dwellings also allow a degree of spaciousness between them. By contrast, the development would almost fill the width of the plot, save for a gap of around 100mm on either side. In removing the remaining gaps at either side of the bungalow, and the space created by its hipped roof, the development would appear cramped within the site, and would thus be significantly at odds with the prevailing layout of the area.
7. I accept that the development would be in keeping with the front line of No 13, and would achieve a symmetry which has been lost from a number of the nearby dwellings. I agree that, in itself, the design would be well-proportioned. However, these factors would not outweigh the harm I have identified above.
8. I conclude that the development would unacceptably harm the character and appearance of the surrounding area. It would therefore conflict with the provisions of Policy ENV39 and Policy H3 of the Bexley Council Unitary Development Plan (UDP, April 2004), insofar as they jointly seek to ensure that development is compatible with the character of the surrounding area.

Living conditions

9. The Council also voices concern regarding the effect of the proposal on the living conditions of neighbouring occupants at 9 Westwood Lane. The ground floor side elevation of No 9 has a dining room window which faces south towards the appeal site. This window is roughly in line with the lean-to single storey addition to the rear of No 11.
10. The main outlook from this room appears to be via the larger windows to the rear elevation, which face east along the garden, and this would not be altered by the development. The outlook from the side window is currently substantially restricted by the boundary wall between Nos 9 and 11. Although it faces south, sunlight to this window is undoubtedly restricted by the presence of No 11 for a significant part of the day. The development would bring a two storey wall closer to the boundary with No 9, but this would not project in depth beyond the existing main footprint of the bungalow and so overshadowing to the side window would not be significantly increased. Although the proposed rear single storey element would have a slightly deeper projection than the existing rear extension, its mono-pitched roof slope would help to lessen the impact on the side window at No 11.
11. Therefore, whilst the development would have some impact on the outlook from the side window, and the amount of daylight and sunlight reaching it, the main aspect of the dining room would remain unaffected. As result, I do not

consider that the living conditions of the occupants of No 11 would be so materially harmed as to warrant the withholding of planning permission.

12. The proposal would thus accord with the provisions of UDP Policy ENV39, insofar as it seeks to ensure that development would not prejudice the environment of the occupiers of adjacent property.

Conclusion

13. Despite my finding that the development would not harm the living conditions of neighbours, it would unacceptably harm the character and appearance of the area. Therefore, taking all other matters into consideration, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Elaine Gray

INSPECTOR