

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 18 January 2017

by Les Greenwood MRTPI

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

Decision date: 26 January 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/E0345/D/16/3162238

7 Galsworthy Drive, Caversham Park Village, Reading RG4 6PE

- 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 P Grayston against the decision of Reading Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 161464 was refused by notice dated 5 October 2016.
 - The development proposed is a double storey side extension and replacement of the pitched roof for an existing conservatory.
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Preliminary matters

1. The application plans show an extension to the conservatory as well as the replacement of its roof. In my formal decision below I have therefore used the more accurate description of the proposed development given on the appeal form and on the Council's refusal notice. I have considered the appeal on the basis of the amended plans submitted during the application process.

Decision

2. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for a 2 storey side extension, extension of the existing rear conservatory and replacement of the conservatory roof in accordance with the terms of the application Ref 161464, dated 20 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 development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: PROP/PLANS/01/AM, PROP/ELEs/01 (amended), PROP/ROOF/CEILING/01/AM, and PROP/SITE LEVELS /01.
 - 3) The materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of the extensions hereby permitted shall match those used in the existing building.

Main issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the house and the local area.
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Reasons

4. 7 Galsworthy Drive is a link detached house located in a prominent, elevated position at the corner of Kendal Avenue, within a residential area of similar detached and semi-detached houses. The estate was laid out with houses including No 7 effectively backing onto the streets. No 7's rear conservatory therefore faces towards Galsworthy Drive.
5. The proposal would include the extension and reconfiguration of the conservatory to form a largely brick built, pitched roof study. The Council raises no objection to this element, which would enhance the quality and appearance of the house.
6. The main part of the proposal is a 4m wide, 2 storey side extension that would fill in part of the wide area of garden between the house and Kendal Avenue. Such gaps on corner plots are part of the character of the area, providing a greater sense of spaciousness within what is otherwise a more closely built up estate. The Council's Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG): *A Design Guide to House Extensions* advises that where side extensions would result in the loss of a gap to the detriment of local character they will not normally be granted planning permission. In this case, however, the gap would not be lost. Sufficient space would remain so that the building would not overly crowd the junction and the house would remain reasonably proportionate to its large plot.
7. The proposal would also comply with the SPG's advice that 2 storey side extensions should normally be smaller in scale than the existing house. The house, as extended, would be much wider than is typical in the area, but its width and bulk would not be out of place in a street scene containing pairs of semi-detached houses of similar scale.
8. Council officers have advised that a narrower, 3.5m wide extension would more likely be acceptable, based on an unpublished rule of thumb restricting side extensions to half the width of the main house. I see nothing wrong with the appropriate use of such informal guidelines, but in this case find no actual harm in allowing a side extension of slightly greater width.
9. The proposed side extension would sit forward of the houses in Kendal Avenue, but would be sufficiently separated from them in terms of distance and levels so that this would not be harmful. It would not be set down from the main roof or set back from the main frontage, as advised by the SPG. The Council accepts, however, that this is reasonable in light of the layout and geometry of the house. I note that the glazing of the extension at ground floor level would not exactly match that of the rest of the house, but find no overriding need for uniformity in this aspect of the design. Finally, a new retaining wall around part of the garden would not be intrusive in any public views.
10. I conclude that the proposal would not harm the character or the appearance of the house or the local area. It therefore accords with the aims of Core Strategy Policy CS7, Sites and Detailed Policies Document Policy DM9 and the SPG, to ensure that all extensions are of high design quality that maintains and enhances the character and appearance of the area, respecting the character of the house and the pattern of neighbouring properties.

11. I impose a condition specifying the relevant (amended) plans to provide certainty. A further condition requiring the use of matching materials is necessary in order to protect the character and appearance of the building and the local area.
12. For the reasons set out above, and having regard to all other matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should succeed.

Les Greenwood

INSPECTOR