
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 24th January 2017

by Jonathan G King BA(Hons) DipTP MRTPI

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

Decision date: 7th February 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/N4205/D/16/3165211

4 Conningsby Close, Bromley Cross, Bolton, Lancashire

- 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 Alistair Hodgson against the decision of Bolton Metropolitan Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 97512/16, dated 21st September 2016, was refused by notice dated 17th November 2016.
 - The development proposed is the removal of garage roof and construction of new first floor extension over, including storage within roof space & two-storey extensions and internal remodelling.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue in this case is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the host dwelling and the locality in which it sits.

Reasons

3. The appeal property comprises a detached house, situated end-on to Conningsby Close, together with a detached double garage to the north-east. The proposed development would involve combining the house and the garage to create a single two-storey building. In brief, this would involve extending the garage to its front and upwards, creating a larger garage and a store with new first floor bedroom accommodation above and further storage in the roof space; extending the house on its south-eastern end over both floors; and linking the two elements, including at main roof level. Neither party has estimated the increase in footprint or floor area; and, as the plans supplied do not cover the whole of the house, I have not been able to calculate it. However, it is clear that the extensions would be considerable and that the resultant house – which has already been extended from its original form – would be of very substantial size.
4. The house is located on a modern residential estate comprising wholly or mainly detached houses of conventional appearance. They vary in size and detailed design, and some have been extended in different ways. However, from what I saw, including properties brought particularly to my attention on behalf of the appellant, none appears to be of a scale or mass that the proposed alterations would bring about to the appeal property.

5. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) says that the Government attaches great importance to the design of the built environment. It adds that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, is indivisible from good planning, and should contribute positively to making places better for people. Planning policies and decisions should not attempt to impose architectural styles or particular tastes and they should not stifle innovation, originality or initiative through unsubstantiated requirements to conform to certain development forms or styles. It is, however, proper to seek to promote or reinforce local distinctiveness. Permission should be refused for development of poor design that fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area.
6. Simply because a house is large, either in absolute terms or relative to others that provide its visual context, does not necessarily mean that it should be regarded as unacceptable. Residential areas can often benefit from the introduction of variety into design, including variety of scale.
7. However, in this case, I consider that the extended property would be so out of scale with its surroundings and so bulky that it would form an incongruous feature in context. Its effect would be greatly emphasised by the fact that it is situated on rising ground and adjoins an area of open land that would make it highly visible when viewed from the north-east. From that direction, the front of the building would be dominated by the side wall of the extended garage. This element of the building, over 13 metres in length and occupying well over half the width of the front elevation, would present a 2-storey height brick wall and roof slope above, relieved only by a single bedroom window at first floor level. It would physically and visually dominate not only the house itself but also this part of the street and the open area. I appreciate that part of the ground floor would be obscured by an existing brick boundary wall, but that would do little to lessen the impact.
8. Moreover, this large, mostly blank wall would be seen in public views together with the existing gable wall of the house at its north-western end, also mainly unrelieved brickwork, and the double garage door, closer to the road by 5.4 metres compared to the present situation. The other elevations would not be readily visible from public viewpoints, but all, to my mind, would appear awkward, with the extensions dominating the original form of the house.
9. In my opinion, the proposed extensions would fail to reinforce local distinctiveness and would represent very poor design. For these reasons I conclude that the proposed development would be in conflict with Bolton Core Strategy Policy CG3, in particular the requirements that development should contribute to good urban design; have regard to the overall built character of the area; and be compatible with the scale and massing of development locally. It would also breach the guidance of the Council's Supplementary Planning Document *House Extensions*, which expects a well-designed extension to be subordinate in relation to the dwelling and of a size and scale proportional to the existing house. In terms of my issue, the extensions would have an unacceptably adverse effect on the character and appearance of both the dwelling and the locality. I firmly reject the assertion on behalf of the appellant that the development would result in an improved high quality architectural design. It would not.

Other matters

10. I am aware that representations have been made from 2 neighbouring properties concerning the impact of the development on the amenity of the occupiers. The Council considered these matters at the time of refusing the application by reference to its own policies and standards. It concluded that the living conditions of the occupiers would not be unreasonably harmed. I have no reason to conclude otherwise.
11. In reaching my decision I have had regard to the arguments put forward on behalf of the appellant, including that the proposed development would provide needed accommodation in a family house. But neither this nor any other matter raised is sufficient to outweigh the harm I have identified.

Overall conclusion

12. For the reasons given above and by reference to my main issue, I conclude overall that the proposed development would have a significantly detrimental effect both on the host dwelling and on the locality in which it sits. It is unacceptable in planning terms by reference to the Council's planning policies and guidance, and to the NPPF.

Jonathan G King

Inspector