

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 16 February 2017

by R C Shrimplin MA(Cantab) DipArch RIBA FRTPI FCI Arb MCIL

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

Decision date: 24 February 2017

Appeal Reference: APP/G5180/D/16/3166333

57 Slades Drive, Chislehurst, BR7 6JXD

- 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 Mrs E Stubbs against the decision of the London Borough of Bromley Council.
 - The application (reference DC/16/04962/FULL6, dated 19 October 2016) was refused by notice dated 13 December 2016.
 - The development proposed is described in the application form as a “two storey front and side extension and single storey rear extension”.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main issue

2. The main issue to be determined in this appeal is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the host building and its surroundings.

Reasons

3. Slades Drive is a pleasant residential location, running along the contours of a hillside, with properties on its northern frontage standing in an elevated position, above the level of the road. Houses along the road are somewhat varied in design and type but are generally traditional in form and appearance, with pitched roofs above masonry construction, having brickwork or rendered elevations. The houses along the road frontages have relatively deep front gardens, enabling cars to be parked, while leaving additional space for some planting.
4. Number 57 Slades Drive is located at the end of a short terrace, with a strong gable feature facing the road, mirrored by a similar feature at the opposite end of the terrace. It is one of a number of dwellings in the vicinity constructed in the same idiom, with rendered walls under a steep pitched roof. Although the rendering is in need of attention the building is attractive and in harmony with the streetscene.
5. The appeal proposals would involve the construction of a very small projection at the rear of the dwelling, with a substantial addition to the front elevation,

- wrapping around its front corner. The new construction would be in a very different, modern style.
6. Among other things, the 'National Planning Policy Framework' emphasises the aim of "requiring good design" in the broadest sense (notably at Section 7) and it points out the importance of creating an attractive streetscape and maintaining the overall quality of the area. At the same time, of course, the NPPF acknowledges that modern design can have a role to play in creating a contemporary townscape, for example at paragraph 60, which states that "planning policies and decisions should not attempt to impose architectural styles or particular tastes and they should not stifle innovation, originality or initiative ...".
 7. An emphasis on the importance of good design is also to be found in the Development Plan. Policy BE1 of the 'London Borough of Bromley Unitary Development Plan' deals with the "Design of New Development" generally, while Policy H8 is concerned with "Residential Extensions". Policy H9 specifically relates to "Side Space" alongside buildings, with a detailed criterion for separation.
 8. The proposed rear extension to number 57 Slades Drive would be a clearly modern addition to the property but it would be very modest in scale and is not contentious in itself.
 9. By contrast, the proposed new front extensions would be very visible in the streetscene. The submitted drawings show an overtly modern design with a flat roof construction rising above the eaves of the existing house and cutting across its front gable, while the drawings indicate that the external elevations of the extension would have a rendered finish, creating a crisp geometric form, out of keeping with the host building (in spite of making use of similar materials).
 10. As the 'National Planning Policy Framework' points out, modern architectural design can produce good townscape solutions, in the right circumstances. In this case, however, the basic premise of the scheme is discordant in its context. The new flat roof would cut across the existing front gable feature, undermining the clarity of the original concept, while the flat roofed section as a whole, standing in front of the traditional form of the existing building, would dominate in the streetscene and create a jarring composition when complete. The visual impact would be exacerbated by the rise in the natural slope of the land away from the road itself.
 11. Moreover, the scheme as submitted would clearly conflict with the Unitary Development Plan, notably Policy H9.
 12. The existing building is set well back from the edge of the public highway and the plot is laid out at an angle to its neighbour, number 55, to the west. There is a clear visual break in the street frontage between the appeal site and its neighbour at number 55 (which lies at the south-eastern end of its own short terrace). These factors distinguish the appeal site and may, perhaps, make it possible for an alternative scheme to be devised that would be in harmony with the host building and its surroundings, notwithstanding the conflict with Development Plan policy and the erosion of the symmetrical character of the original design concept.

13. Nevertheless, in the current appeal, the dominant effect of the proposed front extension on the host building and its intrusive and ungainly visual impact in the streetscene make it unacceptable in planning terms.
14. Evidently, the appeal site lies within an established urban area, which is "sustainable" in planning terms, and the proposed development would make a useful addition to the existing house. Nevertheless, I am convinced that the harm that would be done to the architectural qualities of the host building and to the streetscene outweigh the benefits of the project. Hence, I have concluded that the scheme before me would conflict with both national and local planning policies (including Policies in the Development Plan) and that it ought not to be allowed. Although I have considered all the matters that have been raised in the representations, I have found nothing to cause me to alter my decision.

Roger C Shrimplin

INSPECTOR