

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 27 February 2017

by Clive Tokley MRTPI

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

Decision date: 20th March 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/M1595/D/16/3166237

55 Drake Road, Chafford Hundred, Grays, RM16 6PS

- 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 and Mrs J Harris against the decision of Thurrock Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 16/01270/HHA dated 9 September 2016 was refused by notice dated 7 December 2016.
 - The development proposed is a first floor side and rear extension.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for a first floor side and rear extension at 55 Drake Road, Chafford Hundred, Grays, RM16 6PS. The permission is in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref 16/01270/HHA dated 9 September 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 drawings: 2016/09/01/55DR, 2016/09/02/55DR, 2016/09/03/55DR and 2016/09/04/55DR.
 - 3) 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.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

3. Drake Road is a local distributor road within an extensive modern housing development. The informal layout of the area contains a mix of frontage developments and small clusters of dwellings arranged around shared access and parking areas. No 55 is part of a cluster of 6 detached dwellings on the inside of a shallow curve on the south side of Drake Road. A cluster of 4 similar dwellings lies immediately to the east.
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4. The frontage housing is generally set back from the road with car parking in front gardens. However within the dwelling clusters and at junctions the flank walls of houses are built much closer to the road creating visual pinch-points in the street. As I walked along Drake Road in the vicinity of the appeal property my impression was that the majority of the flank walls built close to the pavement were of two storeys. The exceptions were at the appeal property and at No 45 in the cluster to the east. Some of the dwellings had shrubs and climbing plants within the narrow strip between the flank walls and the pavement but I also saw examples of fences and walls at the back edge of the pavement with no vegetation resulting in a hard edge to the street.
5. As a result of the curve of the road and the open parking and access area No 55 is prominently in view when approached from the east along Drake Road. Its prominence is increased by its elevated position as compared with the road. When approached from the west the rear elevation is seen in the context of the neighbouring frontage house and this, combined with the flank wall being angled away from the road, results in it being less prominent.
6. The original house and garage has been extended to the north by a single-storey addition with a combination of a shallow-pitched lean-to and a gabled roof. The proposal would result in the massing of the front elevation being almost symmetrical about a central forward projection. The appearance of the front of the proposal would not exactly match the existing building; however by eliminating the exiting jumble of roof forms it would result in the dwelling having a more balanced and coherent appearance both at the front and the side.
7. The refusal reason refers to Annex 1 of the *Thurrock Borough Local Plan (1997)* but the extract quoted, which seeks to prevent the creation of a continuous façade, does not relate to the circumstances of this proposal. The officer report refers to another provision of Annex 1 (not referenced in the refusal reason) which indicates that in areas with a uniform character and spacious street scene a gap of 4.5m at first floor level and 1.8m at ground floor level should be retained between extensions and the site boundary with the highway. This proposal would not alter the gap at ground floor level, which is significantly less than 1.8m, but would reduce the gap at first floor level.
8. At its closest points the distance between the stepped two-storey flank wall of the proposal and the back edge of the pavement would be less than other similarly-positioned houses in the vicinity. However the dwellings in this area do not have a uniform relationship with the street and in this context the proposal would not appear excessively dominant or obtrusive. The proposal would not disrupt a spacious street scene and it would not conflict with the objectives of Annex 1 or with Policies PMD1, PMD2 and CSTP22 of the Council's *Core Strategy and Policies for Management of Development (as amended)* adopted in 2015.

Conclusion

9. I have concluded that the proposal would improve the appearance of the dwelling and would not detract from the distinctive spatial character and appearance of the area. Taking account of all matters I conclude that the appeal should succeed. I have imposed the normal commencement condition

and to accord with best practice a condition is imposed identifying the approved drawings. In order to ensure a satisfactory appearance I have imposed a third condition requiring that the external materials should match the existing.

Clive Tokley

INSPECTOR