
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 6 June 2017

by Rory MacLeod BA MRTPI

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

Decision date: 4th July 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/Q3820/D/17/3170714
5 Cranmer Walk, Crawley RH10 7WR

- 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 Richard James against the decision of Crawley Borough Council.
 - The application Ref CR/2016/0826/FUL, dated 24 September 2016, was refused by notice dated 27 January 2017.
 - The development proposed is the erection of a two storey side extension.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

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

Reasons

3. The appeal site comprises an end of terrace two storey house with front, side and rear gardens. The house is set back behind the front wall of the attached house 4 Cranmer Walk. The surrounding area is characterised by similar houses set in short terraces or semi-detached pairs arranged informally either along the footpath Cranmer Walk or around culs-de-sac. All the housing is on one side of Cranmer Walk. On the opposite side is a continuous strip of soft landscaping along the banks to a river, the Gatwick Stream. The curvature of Cranmer Walk, and the stagger in the properties fronting it, reflects the meanderings of the water course.
4. The proposed extension would be flush with the front wall of the house and designed to match the existing property in relation to materials, fenestration and a gable end roof. It would replace a wall some 2m high that separates the front and side gardens and the side garden from a wedged shaped grassed strip adjacent to Cranmer Walk. Whereas the wall is partially screened by shrubs in the front garden or along the amenity strip, the extension would form a conspicuous feature when viewed from either direction along Cranmer Walk due to its height and massing. The extension would virtually abut the footway at its southern end and in this respect its siting would be unduly close to Cranmer Walk. It would not be in keeping with the local pattern of development.

5. There is variation in the separation distances between the front or flank walls of buildings and Cranmer Walk due to the irregular pattern of development but there is generally a front garden or soft landscaped strip inbetween. To the south east of the site, the flank wall of the garage at 1 Sheldon Close is separated from Cranmer Walk by a narrow shrub bed. Farther to the south east is 5 Parker Close where a two storey side extension has been added; the extension has been set back behind the front wall of the house and this helps to increase the separation to Cranmer Walk.
6. The appellant has also pointed to the lack of third party objection to his proposal and that there are other two storey side extensions in the vicinity carried out close to footpaths without the need to be stepped back. Furthermore, that the extension would follow the line of the present boundary wall that already abuts the footway, and would be barely perceptible from some locations due to the stagger in the terrace. However, my findings from the site inspection are that the extension would be visible from positions to the front and rear of the site and that it would be unduly close to the footway.
7. Policies CH2 and CH3 of the Crawley Borough Local Plan (2015-2030) (adopted December 2015) (CBLP) are general policies encouraging good urban design and amongst other objectives, requiring proposals to respond to and reinforce local distinctive patterns of development. Policy CH7 of the CBLP has similar objectives in relation to landscaping. Cranmer Walk has a distinctive verdant character and the separation of buildings from the footway is an important element of this character. By reason of its proximity to the footway combined with its scale and mass, the proposed extension would detract from the character and appearance of the area and so be in conflict with these planning policies. The Urban Design Supplementary Planning Document (adopted October 2016) includes guidance for development adjacent to the public realm to provide a positive interface with it. The proposal would not integrate well with Cranmer Walk and so would also be at variance with this guidance.
8. The appeal submissions show that planning permission has recently been granted for a two storey extension incorporating a set back from the frontage by 2 metres at ground and first floor levels. This forms a fallback position for the appellant. However, it seems to me that the smaller scheme would fit into its surroundings more comfortably and it does not lead me to find the larger appeal proposal acceptable. I acknowledge the comments submitted in relation to this alternative that the appeal proposal is the preferred option having regard to better internal circulation, a larger overall size and more scope for other internal alterations to meet future aspirations for an expanding family. Nevertheless, this does not outweigh my finding of harm to the character and appearance of the area.

Conclusion

9. Having had regard to all other matters, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Rory MacLeod

Inspector