



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 20 June 2017

by Timothy C King BA(Hons) MRTPI

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

Decision date: 26 July 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/C3620/W/17/3174473
13 Raymead Way, Fetcham, KT22 9LY

- 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 Evans against the decision of Mole Valley District Council.
 - The application Ref MO/2017/0073/PLA, dated 29 June 2016, was refused by notice dated 10 March 2017.
 - The development proposed is demolition of existing semi-detached dwelling and construction of replacement semi-detached dwelling.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

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

Reasons

3. Raymead Way, a residential street which is developed on its west side only, largely comprises of pairs of semi-detached dwellings. The dwellings are set in deep plots and are set back from the street behind front gardens.
4. The appeal dwelling and its immediate neighbour, No 12, retain their characteristic hipped-roofs, as do Nos 10 and 11. However, No 14 has undergone a series of extensions and alterations and now appears significantly different to its immediate neighbour, No 15. The most prominent alteration has been the change to the roof from a hip to a gable end.
5. It is proposed that No 13 be demolished, No 12 would remain, and the rebuild would create a larger dwelling which, although maintaining the current separation gap with No 14, would appear significantly bulkier due to its increased width and the proposed gable end, which would be wider than the existing roof.
6. The new dwelling would be of a more contemporary form, although the existing ridgeline would be maintained. The existing gabled feature above the first floor bedroom on the front elevation, common to the twinned pair, would be recreated but, in replicating the altered form of No 14, the characteristic symmetry with its immediate neighbour would be lost. This would result in a marked imbalance between the pair.

7. The proposal would also involve the erection of a three-storey rear extension which would result in the new dwelling's side and rear elevations appearing uncharacteristically and unduly bulky. This would compound the imbalance on the front elevation and, with the flank wall visible along Raymead Way on the approach from the north, and the rear elevation visible to neighbouring occupiers, I consider that this incongruously bulky form would distort the simple proportions of the pair.
8. The appellant, in support of his case, largely relies on the current fall-back position, or what could be built without necessitating a grant of planning permission. The creation of a gable-end under permitted development rights, similar to that at No 14, is highlighted and, in this context, the appellant considers that the proposal should be looked upon favourably. However, he acknowledges that this approach would result in a less bulky development than that now proposed. Indeed, I consider that the proposed development would, in terms of incongruity to No 12, go beyond the imbalance that has resulted between Nos 14 and 15.
9. The appellant also takes the view that the proposal would represent sustainable development. This would involve, amongst other things, seeking positive improvements in the quality of the built environment as well as in people's quality of life. However, I have no substantive evidence of how this would be achieved in this particular case and so give the matter no weight. The appellant maintains that the existing house suffers from damp and structural problems but there is nothing before me to confirm as such in terms of technical evidence.
10. I consider that the design based policies, Policy CS14 of the Mole Valley Core Strategy (CS) and Policies ENV22 and ENV23 of the Mole Valley Local Plan (LP) are of most relevance to this appeal, the essence of which require that development should respect local character and setting. The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) advocates high quality design, but not necessarily at the expense of local distinctiveness. In this particular instance I am not convinced that the proposal would meet these aims and, despite the similarities with No 14, as altered, the resultant stark contrast and imbalance with No 12 would weigh heavily against the proposal.
11. I therefore conclude that the proposal would be harmful to the character and appearance of the area, conflicting with the design objectives of CS Policy CS14, LP Policies ENV22 and ENV23 and also relevant advice within the Framework.
12. Whilst I accept that the proposal would provide some much needed additional accommodation insofar as the replacement dwelling would be larger than the existing house, such a benefit must be weighed against the visual harm I have identified would result. Although the fall-back position is a material consideration, the new dwelling's degree of bulk and massing is out of character with its immediate setting and also the surrounding area. The appellant has drawn to my attention that there are a wide variety of extensions in the local area and comments that the site does not lie within a conservation area. He has also cited parallels with a case in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. However, none of these matters alter the harm that would arise from the proposal before me or alter my conclusions.

13. For the above reasons, and having had regard to all other matters raised, the appeal is dismissed.

Timothy C King

INSPECTOR