

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 24 July 2017

by Ann Skippers BSc (Hons) MRTPI

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

Decision date: 31 July 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/G2245/D/17/3176156

28 The Butts, Otford, Sevenoaks, Kent TN14 5PR

- 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. Nick Vukmirovic against the decision of Sevenoaks District Council.
 - The application Ref SE/16/03867/HOUSE was refused by notice dated 9 March 2017.
 - The development proposed is 'First floor rear extension, single storey side & rear extension with rooms in the roof, a loft extension & improvements to the external appearance (Materials & Fenestration)'.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The proposal consists of a number of elements. The Council has only objected to the side and rear extension with rooms in the roof. For this reason, I focus on this element of the proposal in my decision.
3. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the host building and the surrounding area.

Reasons

4. The Butts is a pleasant residential street characterised by grass verges and pavements to both sides of the road, trees, hedges and low walls. Although there are different styles of dwellings along the street, there is common spacing between dwellings punctuated by first floor gaps over garages which sometimes link the properties is apparent. Overall the feeling is one of spaciousness.
 5. No 28 is in a group of detached dwellings towards one end of the street. No 26 has a two storey side extension built up to the boundary with the appeal property. No 30 has a gap at first floor level and sides onto the rear gardens of dwellings in The Old Walk. This group of three is on a slight curvature in the road. At present, each property is distinct and reads as detached even though Nos 26 and 28 are close together. The group makes an important contribution to the visual qualities of the area.
 6. The side extension would be built close to the common boundary with No 30 leaving some 0.3m to the boundary. Whilst a single storey garage in this position would not be unusual or appear out of place, the proposal would close
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the gap at first floor level. This would be despite its set back, its proposed design and the introduction of a lower roof with a dormer and integration with a front canopy which all seek to minimise its impact and address concerns following an earlier refusal of planning permission in 2014.

7. Spaces at first floor level are common to this street and indeed a characteristic of the wider residential area. It is not only the space at first floor level but also the width of the gap at first floor level which is important. The Council's Residential Extensions Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) suggests a minimum of a metre should usually be retained between the side wall of an extension and the boundary. In this case, 0.3m is retained and No 30 also has a gap to the common boundary with No 28 and so the space between the properties would be more than the 0.3m. However, the common gap at first floor level in the locality is a garage width or so, far more than the SPD suggests. Even with a metre or so retained the first floor element would look out of character. I note that the SPD indicates that the gap may need to be wider depending on the context and consider this to be one such context.
8. The introduction of the first floor element of the side extension would add considerable size and bulk to the property. It would reduce and largely remove the space at first floor level between Nos 28 and 30, an important townscape feature. The spaces at first floor level permit glimpses and views between dwellings often to trees and greenery beyond contributing to the sense of spaciousness. In addition the proposal would bring Nos 26, 28 and 30 closer together. This would create a cramped and terracing effect.
9. This element of the proposal would materially harm the character and appearance of the host property and the surrounding area.
10. Therefore the proposal would not accord with Policy EN1 of the adopted Allocations and Development Management Plan which seeks to deliver high quality design that responds to local character or take account of the Residential Extensions SPD or the National Planning Policy Framework which seeks to secure high quality design.
11. Various other extensions in the area have been drawn to my attention. Whilst no two sites or proposals are identical, in many ways these demonstrate the unfortunate visual impact of reducing the gap at first floor level inappropriately when such gaps are an integral part of the character and appearance of this locality and so important to its spaciousness.
12. For the reasons given above and having had regard to all other matters raised, the appeal should be dismissed.

Ann Skippers

INSPECTOR