
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 18 July 2017

by Elizabeth Pleasant DipTP MRTPI

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

Decision date: 1 August 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/D5120/D/17/3174503
379 Blackfen Road, Sidcup, Kent DA15 9NJ

- 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 Kevin Porter against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Bexley.
 - The application Ref 16/03240/FUL, dated 15 December 2016, was refused by a notice dated 9 February 2017.
 - The development proposed is extensions and alterations to convert existing chalet bungalow into a two/three storey residential dwelling.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matter

2. The description of the development set out above is taken from the Council's Decision Notice and appeal form. It has been altered from that on the application form which described the proposal as a first floor extension and loft conversion, ground floor single storey entrance lobby extension to front of dwelling. I consider the amended description to more accurately describe the appeal proposal. The Council determined the application on this basis and so shall I.

Main Issues

3. The main issues in this case are the effect on the:
 - Character and appearance of the host property and surrounding area; and
 - Living conditions of neighbouring occupiers, with particular regard to loss of outlook and privacy.

Reasons

Character and appearance

4. Blackfen Road, in the vicinity of the appeal site, is characterised by mixed residential development, including small bungalows, and detached and semi-detached dwellings. Many of these properties have been altered and extended, particularly by the addition of dormer windows to their roofs. However, the overall scale of development is predominantly two-storey in height.

5. The appeal property is a small vernacular 1930's bungalow. It has been previously extended to the rear, and the appeal proposal would develop the property further on this extended footprint to create a two/three storey dwelling. Although the third floor accommodation would be contained within the roof space, the introduction of a dominant gable containing a single window at third floor level, would mean the resultant property would appear as a three-storey dwelling. Moreover, the overall design and composition of the elevations and roof scape would further accentuate the mass and bulk of the proposed dwelling.
6. The proposed fenestration to the street frontage, and its timber cladding, would give the proposal a horizontal emphasis. However, when viewed in the context of the height and width of the proposed front gable, the resultant dwelling would not be reflective of the scale or form of existing residential development in the street. Moreover, the character and appearance of the original property would be no longer discernible. Furthermore, the roof would have an unusual profile with hipped ends to its ridge and three dormers with differing roof forms. The design of the roof would not be cohesive, and the dwelling would have an incongruous appearance overall.
7. I have taken into consideration the varied form and character of existing residential development on Blackfen Road. However, despite a number of roof additions, the properties still generally display their original design characteristics and form. The proposed development in this case, would significantly alter the character and appearance of the host dwelling and introduce a form of development that would not respond to the existing character of the area. I noted on my site visit that a three-storey dwelling has been developed at 417 Blackfen Road. However, I do not have the full details of the original dwelling on this site, and this property does not have any roof additions, nor does its street profile have the same mass and form as the development proposed in this case. No 417 is not therefore directly comparable to this case, and in any event, the existence of this other development does not justify the harm I have identified to the character and appearance of the area.
8. I conclude that the proposed development would have a harmful effect on the character and appearance of the host dwelling and surrounding area. It would conflict with the development plan, and in particular with Policies H9, ENV39 and the Design and Development Control Guidelines 2 of the London Borough of Bexley's Unitary Development Plan, 2004 (UDP) which seek to ensure that all new development, including extensions and alterations, are, amongst other criteria, of a high standard of design, compatible with the surrounding area, and that extensions are subordinate to the existing building and reflect its character.

Living conditions

9. The neighbouring residential property to the east of the appeal site, No 381 Blackfen Road, has a side extension which abuts its common boundary with the appeal site. The rear elevation of this extension is recessed approximately three metres behind the rear wall of the original dwelling, and the adjacent rear wall of the appeal property. There are windows in its rear elevation which serve rooms at both ground and first floor level.

10. At the time of my site visit, which was in the late afternoon, the rear elevation of No 381's extension was already partially in shade. It is therefore clear to me that the proposed increase in height of the appeal property so close to it, would not only increase the amount of shading to the windows in this extension, but moreover, it would have a significantly overbearing impact and create a sense of enclosure for the occupiers of this property, particularly within the ground floor room.
11. To the rear and north of the site a bungalow has been developed which fronts towards the rear elevation of the appeal property. There is approximately 25 metres between their facing elevations, and due to a change in ground levels, the finished floor level of bungalow is well above that of the ground floor of No 379. Despite the increase in height proposed to the rear elevation of No 379, I am satisfied that the appeal proposal would be a sufficient distance away so as not to result in any material overlooking of this bungalow, either to the dwelling itself or its front garden area. Furthermore, due to the difference in ground levels between the two properties the proposed development would not be overbearing.
12. I conclude that whilst the future occupiers of the bungalow to the north of the appeal site would have acceptable living conditions, the proposed development would have a harmful effect on the existing living conditions of the occupiers of 381 Blackfen Road, with particular regard to outlook and sunlight. I therefore find conflict with the development plan, and in particular with Policies H6, H7, H8, H9, ENV 39 and the Design and Development Control Guidelines 2 of the UDP which seek to ensure, amongst other criteria, that development does not adversely affect the privacy and amenity of adjoining residents including daylight, sunlight and outlook.

Other Matters

13. I understand the appellant's desire to improve and extend this home. However, the extension proposed is substantial and I am not convinced that it would not be possible to extend or improve this property in a more sympathetic manner. In any event, the private wishes of the appellant do not outweigh the harm I have identified in the main issues set out above.

Conclusion

14. For the reasons given above and taking into account all other matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Elizabeth Pleasant

INSPECTOR