

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 20 July 2017

by Les Greenwood MRTPI

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

Decision date: 1 August 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/P5870/D/17/3175710

16 The Avenue, Cheam SM2 7QB

- 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 Mark and Tina Rowe against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Sutton.
 - The application Ref A2016/76093/HHA was refused by notice dated 2 March 2017.
 - The development proposed is the erection of 2 side extensions at first floor level, raising the height of a 2 storey central bay in the front elevation and installing 3 dormer windows in the rear elevation of the roof.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the house, this part of The Avenue and the designated Burton Estates Area of Special Local Character (ASLC).

Reasons

3. The Avenue is a leafy residential street lined by houses of varied but harmonious design, often in an Arts and Crafts style. The Council has not published any character appraisal for the wider ASLC, but it is aptly described by the appellants as an area of large detached houses set within substantial plots in spacious streets with high quality landscape setting.
 4. No 16 is a substantial house with 2 full height bays and a narrow, central projecting gable at the front, breaking through the eaves and serving as a stair tower. Existing extensions to both sides at first floor level are stepped in from the side boundary. The proposal would replace these with new extensions that would not step in at the side. It also includes extensions at roof level, increasing the height of the stair tower and providing 3 large dormer window structures at the back.
 5. An important part of The Avenue's spacious character stems from the gaps between buildings, especially at first floor and roof level, which provide breaks in the built form, space for landscaping and views through to trees and sky. No 16 already sits close to the buildings to either side. Closing down these
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gaps further as proposed would look cramped on the site and close down views through the built frontage, harming the local street scene.

6. I recognise that the proposed gaps to the side boundaries would not be much different to the minimum 1 metre recommended by the Council's Supplementary Planning Document *Design of Residential Extensions* (SPD4). The important consideration, however, is the gap to the next buildings, which should if anything be greater than the normal minimum here in order to maintain the area's character. I also recognise that some other houses on the street do sit fairly close to their neighbours, but I saw none with such narrow gaps on both sides.
7. I likewise saw no other front gable that breaks through the eaves like the one at No 16. As it is, this element of the house is reasonably well-proportioned and its distinctiveness adds to the character of the house and the street. It is already quite slender though, and extending it up to main ridge height as proposed would create an overly dominant and poorly proportioned feature.
8. I have looked at many of the local properties from the long list of examples cited by the appellant. I do not know the particular circumstances of these other cases and as noted above, find significant differences between them and the appeal proposal. I have considered this appeal on its own merits, bearing in mind the current character of the area as influenced by these other developments.
9. I find no objection to the proposed curved-roof dormers to the rear, which would be a complementary, contemporary touch and in any case would be almost entirely out of public view. I nevertheless conclude that the proposal would unacceptably harm the character and appearance of the house, this part of The Avenue and the ASLC. It therefore conflicts with the aims of Policy BP12 of the Core Planning Strategy, Policies DM1, DM3 and DM12 of the Site Development Policies Development Plan Document and SPD4, to ensure that development including house extensions respects local context and distinctive local character, particularly in ASLCs.
10. The impact on living conditions at No 18 next door has also been drawn to my attention as an issue. No 18 has a side window that faces towards the side wall of No 16 at close range, serving a room which is used as habitable accommodation. The proposal would bring a full height wall closer to that window, causing some additional loss of light and outlook. The room would, however, continue to receive sufficient light and maintain an open outlook through its main rear window. I therefore find no undue impact on living conditions at No 18.
11. I sympathise with the appellants' wish to improve their family home, but this does not override my concerns in relation to the main issue. For the reasons set out above, I conclude that the appeal should not succeed.

Les Greenwood

INSPECTOR