



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 10 November 2017

by Gary Deane BSc (Hons) DipTP MRTPI

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

Decision date: 21 November 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/Z5630/D/17/3181836

31 Chesfield Road, Kingston upon Thames KT2 5TH

- 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 Benefield against the decision of the Council of the Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames.
 - The application Ref 17/12309/HOU was refused by notice dated 30 May 2017.
 - The development proposed is the erection of a roof extension including raising the roof.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main issue

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

Reasons

3. The appeal property is a mainly two-storey detached dwelling located in a predominantly residential area. It has a front facing gable and a relatively narrow built frontage to the road compared to its depth into the plot. In the vicinity of the site, detached and semi-detached properties predominate with adjacent buildings generally separated by small gaps.
4. Although there is some variation in the roof forms and building heights along Chesfield Road, there are notable groups of properties that share similar features such as plot widths, eaves and ridge levels and projecting two-storey front bays. The appeal property stands at the end of a short row of buildings that form one such group. Notwithstanding, the variation in facing brick, use of painted render and architectural detailing, the broadly consistent main roof lines within this closely spaced group establishes a rhythm in the streetscape and a sense of unity to their character, which is locally distinctive. The Council's Residential Design Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) recognises that a defining feature of some of the highest quality neighbourhoods is the coherent roof form along residential streets.
5. The proposal is to raise the height of existing dual pitched roof of No 31 by about 1.25 metres along its full length to enable additional living space to be provided within the roofspace. New roof lights would serve the extra living accommodation, as would a new window just below the apex in each of the proposed front and rear facades.

6. With the new built form in place, the proposed extended building would be noticeably taller and more substantial in built form than the adjacent property to the site, which is 29 Chesfield Road, and others in the same group. As a result, the proposal would cause No 31 to gain prominence in the local street scene to which it belongs. That the height and built form of the completed building would markedly contrast with others nearby would cause it to unduly disrupt the established pattern of existing development along this section of Chesfield Road. As a noticeably taller and more substantial building in this particular group, the proposal would be obtrusive when viewed from Chesfield Road notwithstanding the partial screening provided by a roadside tree. The main outcome would be material harm to the area's visual character.
7. Further along and on the opposite side of Chesfield Road and neighbouring streets I saw greater variation in roof forms and heights, to which the appellants have referred and provided photographs. However, it is within the row of similar buildings that the appeal scheme would be visually 'read'. In views from Chesfield Road, the proposed increase in height and built form would appear at odds with the broadly consistent roofscape amongst this group of similar properties, which positively contributes to a cohesive character.
8. There is nothing in the planning policies and guidance before me that would preclude roof level alterations or to a resultant variation in height between the subject property and others nearby. Subtle variations in building heights can add visual interest to the streetscape. The position of No 31 at the end of a line of similar properties also offers an interesting opportunity to create an end stop to the existing development along the same side of the road. However, in doing so, a development proposal should respond to local character and be interwoven into its context by, for instance, reflecting the distinctive pattern established by the buildings within the street frontage.
9. Several properties along Chesfield Road and others nearby have been extended and altered at a high level including No 29. Few details of these schemes are before me and so I am unable to conclude that their particular circumstances are directly comparable with those of the proposal. While the roof level addition at No 29 is clearly evident from the rear, as the appellants' photograph shows, this extension is less evident from the road given its set back position and the upward angle of view from the ground. Consequently, the roof level extension at No 29 and its effect on the streetscape would be far less conspicuous than would be the case with the proposal. The other examples cited and shown in the photographs provided do little to support the proposal because these exemplify the harm that would be caused by the appeal scheme.
10. The appellants refer to the possibility that roof level additions and external alterations at No 31 could be carried out in any event through the exercise of permitted development (PD) rights. If this alternative route were taken, the appellants state that the resultant changes would be less sympathetic and have a greater visual impact than the proposal before me. However, few precise details have been given and no plans have been provided to clearly illustrate these potential alternatives. Consequently, I am unable to conclude that there is a definite PD scheme that would be likely to come forward if planning permission were to be withheld. As such, I attach limited weight to the potential exercise of PD rights in support of the appeal because it is unclear from the evidence that it represents a genuine and realistic fall back position.

11. The new roof lights would not draw the eye from the ground and would in themselves be acceptable, as would the proposed external materials. Similarly, the new front and rear windows would blend in with the existing pattern of fenestration. Nevertheless, for the reasons given, the proposed development would have a detrimental effect on the character and appearance of the host building and the local area. It would be contrary to Policies 7.4 and 7.6 of The London Plan and Policies CS 8 and DM 10 of the Council's Core Strategy. These policies require, amongst other matters, good design that relates well to its surroundings. This principle underpins some of the guidance provided in the Council's SPD, with which the proposal would also conflict.
12. The proposal would make an efficient use of the site. Once complete, the additional living accommodation would improve the living conditions of the appellants. The Framework recognises that pursuing sustainable development involves seeking improvements to the conditions in which people live. However, seeking positive improvements in the quality of the built environment also forms part of the same pursuit. The Framework also notes that developments should respond to local character and add to the overall quality of an area, which the proposal would fail to do. When assessed against the policies in the Framework taken as a whole, the balance of national policy is firmly tipped against the proposal. It is not a sustainable form of development.

Conclusion

13. Overall, for the reasons given above and having regard to all other matters raised including the absence of objections from others, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Gary Deane

INSPECTOR