
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 22 August 2019

by John D Allan BA(Hons) BTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 6th September 2019

Appeal Ref: APP/G5180/D/19/3231249

72 Swievelands Road, Biggin Hill, Kent, TN16 3QU

- 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 C Fowler against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Bromley.
 - The application Ref DC/19/01371/FULL6, dated 20 March 2019, was refused by notice dated 17 May 2019.
 - The development proposed is the erection of a loft conversion/first floor extension with front and rear dormers.
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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 72 Swievelands Road and the wider street scene.

Reasons

3. Swievelands Road runs for a considerable distance from its junction with Sunningvale Avenue at its northern end to where it merges into York Road at its more southern extremity. It is steep in places and sits on a ridge with properties to its western side only along a significant part of its length. These are built on steeply falling land such that they appear as bungalows fronting Swievelands Road, with full two-storey elevations to the rear. At various points the road has several stretches where the highway's surface is unmanaged and heavily pot holed. This makes transition along its length from one end to the other difficult in a motor vehicle without extreme care. In parts it narrows and is more reminiscent of a country lane with dense and mature vegetation to one side. In other parts it resembles a typical sub-urban residential estate. All these features, together with its irregular alignment, means that, despite much repetition to the house types, there is little visual cohesion, with no uniformity or regimentation to the street scene experienced in any medium to long-distance views along Swievelands Road. Instead, there are pockets where houses sit in obvious association with those others

immediately surrounding them, but which are otherwise visually un-associated with those positioned elsewhere along Swievelands Road.

4. The appeal property is a mid-terraced dwelling on split levels. It has a single-storey front elevation and a shallow pitched roof over. The terrace is stepped in height due to the topography of the land. The proposal would include a 'box-like' dormer extension across most of the rear roof slope and which would extend above the height of the existing ridge line by around 0.8m. The roof extension would then project forward, over the ridge, with a linked front facing dormer of narrower width and with a hipped roof and flat top.
5. The front roof slope to the appeal property, and wider terrace of which it forms part, is prominent in the street scene, being low rise and a visually dominant part of the building, including when viewed from the rising levels of Bankside Close, a short stretch of residential cul-de-sac directly opposite No 72. The appeal proposal would entirely remodel the existing roofscape. The height of the building would be noticeably increased and the simple pitched roof composition of the building would be lost in favour of a roof extension that would show little respect for the scale or form of the host dwelling or those in the immediate surrounding area, the overwhelming majority of which are unaltered at roof level.
6. I accept that utilising the existing roof space would make more efficient use of the building, but I find the unsympathetic form of the roof extension would appear incongruous and out of keeping with the character and form of development in its immediate setting. As such, there would be clear conflict with parts a. and c. of Policy 6 *Residential Extensions* of the London Borough of Bromley Local Plan 2019 (LP). Amongst other things, these require the scale and form of alterations to respect or complement the host dwelling and to be compatible with development in the surrounding area, and for dormer windows in particular to be of a size and design appropriate to the roofscape and sited away from prominent roof pitches where dormers are not a feature of the area, as in this case. For similar reasons there would also be conflict with parts a. and b. of LP Policy 37 *General Design of Development*.
7. My attention has been drawn to several examples of various roof extensions to similar properties along Swievelands Road. No 68 forms part of the same terrace to the appeal property. It is the only dwelling within the immediate visual context of No 72 where a roof addition has obviously impacted upon the appearance of a dwelling within the street scene. The extension to No 68 resembles the rear dormer proposed to No 72. It projects above the ridge line and obviously disfigures the stepped alignment of the dwellings within the terrace. It is an incongruous addition, but one that stops short of the scale and bulk of change that is proposed at No 72. As an isolated example in this location, and one that obtained planning permission (Ref 81/02463) almost 40 years ago, this lends little weight in support of the appeal proposal.
8. There are several examples elsewhere along Swievelands Road where similar type properties have been dramatically altered at roof level beyond their original form. However, the significant majority of these all appear along a consolidated stretch where they are seen in relation to each other. These are some distance from the appeal property and do not influence the visual context within which it is set. Furthermore, the majority date from planning

permissions that were granted over 30 years ago in the late 1980s, the only obvious exception being at No 178. In that case, planning permission was given much more recently (Ref 17/05768) for a development that very closely resembles the current appeal proposal. However, the decision to grant planning permission was taken given the context of its setting, where the original character of the terraced dwellings had been materially altered by an array of historic roof extensions. That is clearly not the situation at No 72 and therefore I do not share the appellant's view that the decision to resist such change at the appeal property would represent an unacceptable inconsistency in planning decision making.

Conclusion

9. I have found that, by reason of its size, siting and appearance, the proposed roof extension would harm the character and appearance of 72 Swievelands Road and the wider street scene. As such, there would be conflict with LP Policies 6 and 37. Nothing within the parts of the Council's SPG1 – *General Design Principles* or SPG2 – *Residential Design Guidance* that have been referenced by the appellant support a development that would fail to respect the character or appearance of the area. Neither do Policies 7.4 *Local Character* and 7.6 *Architecture* of The London Plan 2016, or the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) as it relates to the creation of high quality buildings and places. As such, the proposal would not satisfy the Framework's environmental objective for achieving a sustainable form of development.
10. Accordingly, and having regard to all other matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

John D Allan

INSPECTOR