



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 21 October 2019

by Conor Rafferty LLB (Hons), AIEMA, Solicitor (Non-practising)

Decision by Chris Preston BA(Hons) BPI MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 31 October 2019

Appeal Ref: APP/J1535/D/19/3234656

34 Graylands, Theydon Bois, Epping, CM16 7LB

- 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 Flam Cahani against the decision of Epping Forest District Council.
 - The application Ref PL/EPF/1291/19, dated 14 May 2019, was refused by notice dated 16 July 2019.
 - The development proposed is a loft conversion to part of the existing roof space.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Appeal Procedure

2. The site visit was undertaken by an Appeal Planning Officer whose recommendation is set out below and to which the Inspector has had regard before deciding the appeal.

Preliminary Matters

3. The Council has referred to Policies DM9 and DM10 of the Epping Forest District Local Plan Submission Version 2017 (the Emerging Local Plan) in the reason for refusal. These policies refer to high quality design and housing design and quality respectively. However, whilst the Emerging Local Plan has undergone independent examination, no evidence has been submitted on the Inspector's advice or whether there are outstanding objections to these policies. Consequently, until the plan has been examined and found to be sound, the policies therein could be subject to change. Therefore, having regard to Paragraph 48 of the National Planning Policy Framework, I recommend that the policies of the emerging Local Plan be given limited weight when determining the appeal.

Main Issue

4. The effect of the development on the character and appearance of the host building and the surrounding area.

Reasons for the Recommendation

5. The appeal site is located on the western side of Graylands cul-de-sac adjacent to a corner plot of open space. It comprises a semi-detached bungalow with ground floor rear extension and conservatory. The surrounding area is characterised by its residential nature, made up of a variety of property styles. However, the appeal site forms part of a group of six semi-detached bungalows surrounding the pocket of open space. These dwellings have a high similarity in terms of scale, design and frontage albeit that due to

difference in land levels each pair of the semi-detached bungalows sits at slightly different heights. There is a pleasing symmetry in the design of the bungalows which have matching front gables at either end of each pair facing onto the adjacent green. There is no evidence of any previous alterations to the roof form and design of the group and the bungalows contribute positively to the character of the residential area.

6. The proposed development relates to a loft conversion to part of the existing roofspace of the property, which would increase the height of the front and rear gables and raise the eaves height. The proposal has been designed in an attempt to match the existing property by retaining the gable feature and using similar materials. Nonetheless, the scale of the conversion would introduce a feature to the dwelling that would not respect the character and proportions of the property. The proposal would rise above the current roofline and dominate both the front and rear elevations of the dwelling, causing visual harm to the external appearance of the host building. It would appear disproportionate in the context of the property itself and would fail to complement or enhance the appearance of the existing building.
7. The symmetry that exists along the front elevation of each pair of semi-detached bungalows is a defining feature in this group of properties, and the proposal would greatly reduce the sense of coherence with the neighbouring attached dwelling of No 33. While the symmetry between the two properties has previously been altered at the back, there remains a consistency in height along the rear elevations which would be lost as a result of the proposal. The high level of similarity that currently exists at the front elevations of these properties would also be lost. While the height of the proposal would be level with the roofline at No. 35, the defining symmetry between No. 33 and 34 would be lost due to the resulting scale of the gable feature. The addition of the loft conversion would appear an incongruous addition not only when experienced alongside No 33, but in the context of the other bungalows present in this pocket.
8. Furthermore, the addition of a first floor window in the front elevation of the property would represent the first addition of its kind in this group of properties and, as such, would appear out of place. The proportions of the surrounding context would not be respected by the development, which would therefore cause harm to the character and appearance of the immediate area.
9. The property would be particularly visible when exiting the Graylands cul-de-sac due to the fact that it sits alongside a prominent area of open space. While trees present on this open space could offer some screening, the potential for this would be limited due to the sparse nature of these trees and the scale of the proposed development. Views of the property would therefore remain, where it would be experienced alongside the other bungalows, highlighting the incongruous nature of the proposal in the immediate area.
10. I find that the development would have a significantly adverse visual effect on the character and appearance of the host building and the surrounding area. Accordingly, it would fail to comply with Policies CP2 and DBE10 of the Epping Forest District Local Plan, adopted in January 1998.

Other considerations

11. The appellant refers to the fact that planning permission has been previously granted at the site for a loft and rear extension to the existing house. The appellant considers that the proposal that is the subject of this appeal represents a superior scheme that would not overwhelm the proportions of the original house or detract from the symmetry of the semi-detached pair. However, it is notable from the information provided that the previous scheme does not appear to raise the height of the gable at the front elevation of

the property. As such, the impacts of the two schemes are notably different and limited weight is therefore attached to this fallback position.

12. The appellant has also referred to other development within the wider vicinity where the symmetry of the original dwellings has been diminished through the addition of two storey side extensions and hip to gable roof alterations. However, this proposal should be assessed on its own site-specific circumstances, and the presence of side extensions elsewhere is not directly comparable to the effect of raising the ridge height and altering the symmetry of the group of bungalows in question. Consequently, reference to other extensions nearby does not outweigh the harm identified above.

Conclusion and Recommendation

13. Having had regard to all matters raised, I recommend that the appeal should be dismissed.

C Rafferty

APPEAL PLANNING OFFICER

Inspector's Decision

14. I have considered all the submitted evidence and the Appeal Planning Officer's report, and, on that basis, I agree that the appeal should be dismissed.

C Preston

INSPECTOR