
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 2 October 2019

by L Crouch BA (Hons) MSc IHBC

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 20th November 2019

Appeal Ref: APP/Q3820/D/19/3236039

3 Mereworth Drive, Pound Hill, Crawley RH10 7TL

- 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 N Patel against the decision of Crawley Borough Council.
 - The application Ref CR/2019/0390/FUL, dated 30 May 2019, was refused by notice dated 24 July 2019.
 - The development proposed is erection of a part single and part two storey front extension and part garage conversion.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matter

2. The description of the application was amended during the application. I have therefore taken the description from the appeal form and the Council's decision notice.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the development upon the character and appearance of the appeal site and the surrounding area.

Reasons

4. The appeal site is a detached two storey dwelling, with a single storey side extension and an attached, projecting single storey flat roof garage. The garage, although linked, appears as an ancillary element due to the width in proportion to the main property and its simple, visually recessive garage door. The dwelling is set within a spacious plot with an open, largely landscaped frontage and in a staggered arrangement with its neighbours. The appeal site lies on Mereworth Drive, a residential road of mostly two storey detached dwellings of a similar age and with a pleasing variation of scale, designs, materials and plot layouts with open landscaped frontages, which gives a spacious character to the area.
5. From my site visit I saw that 3 Mereworth Drive is constructed from brick with tile hanging to the front elevation with a linear pitched roof. Along with the generally regular arrangement of windows, and subservient single storey mono-pitched front element, the front elevation has a well-proportioned appearance. Despite the flat roof garage, which is staggered forward of the

- principal elevation, overall the front elevation is unassuming in its appearance. The small-scale single storey element, which partially extends across the principal elevation, has a linear mono-pitched hipped roof form. Additionally, the single storey garage with its flat roof gives a horizontal emphasis. This mix of pitched and flat roof elements cumulatively give the front elevation a strong horizontal emphasis. The regular placement of windows, which are generally wider than they are tall, adds to this appearance.
6. The proposed two storey front extension would be positioned prominently on the principal elevation with the ridge of the gable roof form set below the existing ridge. This gable which would be partially tile hung, despite the complementary materials, window design and being a traditional feature, would break the eaves line and extends above it. This would introduce a strong vertical emphasis, and would be a striking design feature, which would harmfully disrupt the horizontal emphasis of the pitched roof appearing at odds with the modest appearance of the property.
 7. This would be further exacerbated by the substantial and prominent two storey gable projection of approximately 2m beyond the original front wall. When this is combined with the single storey mono-pitch element to the principal elevation, and additionally the mono-pitched open porch, would result in a total projection extending to a depth of around 2.7m from the original front wall. Although the porch is open sided it would still be visible in the street scene when approaching and passing the property, particularly heading towards the north, and visible against the backdrop of the garage due to its materials, scale and design.
 8. The scale, form and siting of these extensions, along with the combination of proposed various roof forms, would appear disjointed and incongruous alongside the property, appearing harmfully at odds with the property's largely unassuming appearance and simple, horizontal roof forms. This would protrude into the important open frontage and harmfully diminishing and dominating its spacious character and appearance. The single storey element would further stretch across the principal elevation so that it extends across the full width. Although it would not stretch across the front of the garage this would further intensify the harm and there would be a detrimental visual change as a result.
 9. The single storey mono-pitch to the principal elevation would link with the proposed single storey flat roof extension, which has the same depth as the existing garage, but would increase in its width. This increase in width would result in a larger area and expanse of flat roof, which when combined with the existing projection, would result in a dominating structure alongside the dwelling, protruding into the open frontage.
 10. It is acknowledged that there are other flat roofs in the area, however it is the overall extent of the proposed flat roof, when combined with the extent of the projection to the front, which has a harmful impact on the character and appearance of the appeal site.
 11. It is noted that the flat roof has been retained to protect the neighbour's amenity, that there is no objection on this from the Council, and that the infill would be seen against the backdrop of the existing garage. It is also noted that the appellant states that it has been extended in such a way to ensure that it appears as part of the garage projection, rather than as an addition to the house, and it would not be overly visible in the street scene, unless seen

directly opposite. However, the scale of the flat roof, its combined projection and its encroachment upon the principal elevation, along with the proposed addition of the window and smaller garage door, does not result in a visual separation between the two elements. This blurs the important distinction between the more ancillary garage and the principal dwelling.

12. The flat roof addition would also be visible when passing the site, particularly when viewed heading north, as well as directly opposite. Overall this would result in a significant extension in contrast to the appearance of the existing garage projection, and would not be subservient in its scale, siting, form or design resulting in a harmful impact to the character and appearance of the appeal site.
13. Whilst there is a variety of dwelling styles in the street scene, I was able to see from my site visit that the area also appeared to be originally designed as a planned estate, with some matching house types. Despite some alterations and modification over time, and although the house types are not identical, it is still possible to see that there are matching house types which retain an overall consistency in design, scale and materials, thereby retaining much of its planned appearance. The appeal proposal would further be harmfully out of keeping with the area given this general consistency of overall house types, appearing excessively altered and at odds with the character and appearance of the surrounding area.
14. Although set back from the road frontage due to the scale, form, siting and design the extensions to the front of the appeal site would protrude harmfully into the open frontage. It would extend past the building line of No 5 Mereworth Drive, introducing an incongruous projecting element to the front, which would as a result detract from the spacious character of the street scene. Despite being staggered in its arrangement alongside its neighbours, and set-back behind No 1, the proposal would be prominent in the street scene, and not significantly screened when passing the site and particularly when viewed heading towards the north where it would be visible. Given the visibility within the street scene the proposal would therefore have a harmful impact on the character and appearance of the surrounding area.
15. Crawley Borough Council's Urban Design Supplementary Planning Document 2016 (SPD) sets out that front extensions and porches should be subservient to the rest of the house, in-keeping with the character of the area, should not extend across the whole width of the property and should 'project no more than 1.5m from the original front wall of the main dwelling'. The proposal does not therefore accord with this guideline given the harmful scale and extent of the proposed extensions, which includes an element which stretches across the principal elevation and the extent of the projections, which are greater than 1.5m.
16. Therefore, the proposal would be harmful to the character and appearance of the appeal site and that of the surrounding area for the reasons given above. Consequently, the proposal would be contrary to Policies CH2 and CH3 of the Crawley Borough Local Plan 2015-2030 adopted 2015 (LP), and the SPD. These policies and guidance seek amongst other things, to ensure that development responds to and reinforces locally distinctive patterns of development and landscape character through good quality design and is appropriate in its scale, height, massing, details and materials. The proposal is also contrary to the

National Planning Policy Framework 2019 (the Framework), which has a clear emphasis on good design and taking the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of the area.

Other Matters

17. Other examples have been brought to my attention of various forms of porch, gable designs and flat roof garages which link with the main dwelling in the area. I was also able to see examples of these on my site visit. However, the examples provided are generally not within the immediate vicinity of the site and are set within a different context and character to the appeal site despite mostly being within the same estate. The closest example scheme provided, at No 2 Mereworth Drive, has been withdrawn and I therefore give this limited weight. In addition, some of the examples being provided by the appellant the Council were permitted prior to the adoption of the current LP and SPD. As such these examples do not appear to represent a direct comparison with the appeal site. In any event, I must assess the case before me on its own merits.
18. The appellant has brought to my attention two recent appeal decisions. One appeal¹ was at Dene Tye and here the Inspector concluded that although the proposal did conflict with the specific requirements of the SPD, there was no actual harm caused, and therefore on balance the scheme could be approved. In the second appeal² the Inspector concluded that the proposal was consistent with the guidance set out within the SPD. However, I have concluded that in this case the significant proposed additions cause substantial harm to the character and appearance of the appeal site and the surrounding area and therefore such circumstances are not considered to be the same in this case.
19. It is noted that the proposal is a reduction in bulk and scale on a previously submitted scheme³. However, I must assess this proposal on its own merits.

Conclusion

20. For the reasons given above, I conclude that the appeal be dismissed.

L Crouch

INSPECTOR

¹ APP/Q3820/D/19/3226295

² APP/Q3820/D/19/3225895

³ Council reference CR/2018/0926/FUL