



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 4 February 2020

by Mr W Johnson BA(Hons) DipTP DipUDR MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 2 March 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/D5120/D/19/3240194

122 Gravel Hill Close, Bexleyheath, Kent DA6 7PY

- 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 John Leary against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Bexley.
 - The application Ref 19/01314/FUL, dated 31 May 2019, was refused by notice dated 5 August 2019.
 - The development proposed is a two-storey side extension.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matters

2. For clarity and precision, I have inserted 'Kent' into the address in the banner heading above as it is listed on the appeal form.
3. The host dwelling has accommodation located in its roof and no accompanying drawing has been provided regarding its floor plan. However, the Council have determined the application without this information. Consequently, I have dealt with the appeal on this basis.

Main Issue

4. The main issue in this appeal is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the appeal site and surrounding area.

Reasons

5. The host dwelling is a detached house that has been recently modernised and is located at the end of a row of houses on a residential cul-de-sac. The land levels of the site are lower than its immediate neighbours due to the rising topography towards the road junction with Gravel Hill. Due to the design of the road network there is not an adjacent house to the left of the host dwelling when viewing the house from the front. Additionally, no houses face the front of the site. Beyond the shared side boundary to the left side elevation of the host dwelling is an area of land which comprises vegetation and a number of mature trees. This area is located between the site and the footpath on Gravel Hill Close.
6. Whilst there is no specific policy objection to the principle of a residential extension. The host dwelling has retained a clear sense of balance and its proportions relative to the neighbouring dwellings, which accordingly contributes towards a positive feature of the wider street scene. The proposal

comprises of a 2-storey element, which I find results in an addition of significant bulk and massing to the host dwelling, relative to its existing proportions. Although the appellant disputes the need for any subordination, I do acknowledge that the proposed development would be set away from the side boundary by approximately one metre. However, in this instance, I find that the adverse effect of the proposal would be heightened through the lack of a lower ridge line or set back from the existing front elevation.

7. Whilst, the host dwelling does not have a neighbouring property located adjacent to the proposed scheme, this would not provide sufficient mitigation to overcome the harmful visual effect of the proposal. Additionally, I note that the area of land between the shared side boundary and the footpath on Gravel Hill Close would provide some screening through the mature trees and vegetation. However, it would still be possible to view the scheme from Gravel Hill Close, especially when travelling in the direction away from Rochester Drive. Although, I do recognise that the effectiveness of this screening is likely to improve at different times of the year, I find that it would be unlikely to fully screen the proposed development from public views. This would not be suitably mitigated through the proposed use of similar materials in construction.
8. In any event, the proposed development would be clearly visible when viewing the site from the front. Thus, the resulting significant adverse effect on the host dwelling would therefore still be readily visible in the street scene to the detriment of the character and appearance of the surrounding area. Furthermore, although a similar feature is already present on the rear elevation, the proposed rear bedroom window at first floor would create an irregular fenestration detail on the house, and the blank gable on the proposed side elevation would create a stark and strident feature that would accentuate the harmful visual effects of the proposed development.
9. For the above reasons, I therefore conclude that the proposed development would unacceptably harm the character and appearance of the appeal site and the surrounding area. This would be contrary to the design, character and appearance aims of 'Saved' Policies H9 and ENV39 of the Council's Unitary Development Plan 2004, the associated Design and Development Control Guidelines 2 and the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework).

Other Matters

10. I have had regard to various other matters raised by the appellant, including his need to develop a family home, to accommodate his growing family and to provide additional accommodation for his extended family. Additionally, the appellant has brought to my attention that no objections to the application were received from neighbouring occupiers. However, on the evidence before me these are not reasons to grant permission in the face of the harm identified.
11. I have also noted the comments from the appellant about the way the Council handled the application, but these do not go to the planning merits of the case. I have considered the proposed development on its own merits and concluded there would be harm for the reasons set out above.

Planning Balance and Conclusion

12. Given my findings above, the proposed development would result in harm to the character and appearance of the appeal site and the surrounding area, which would conflict with parts of the environmental objective set out in paragraph 8 of the Framework. Thus, the proposal does not constitute sustainable development.
13. Taking all matters into consideration, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

W Johnson

INSPECTOR