
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 10 March 2020

by Robin Buchanan BA (Hons) MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 2 April 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/G5180/D/20/3245766
30 Homefield Rise, Orpington BR6 0RU

- 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 Mehmet Hulusi against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Bromley.
 - The application Ref DC/19/04418/FULL6, dated 15 October 2019, was refused by notice dated 5 December 2019.
 - The development proposed is front porch, first floor infill to facilitate enlargement of original bathroom and ensuite to the main front bedroom.
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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 the host dwelling and the surrounding area.

Reasons

3. The appeal property is a two storey semi-detached house located within a row of mainly similar houses on the south side of Homefield Rise. These pairs of houses have, broadly, two main arrangements of built form. Some have two storey forward projecting front gables that 'book end' a lower connecting hipped part, which has a footprint indented behind the front plane of the gables. The other pairs of houses, including the appeal property as originally built, have connecting two storey forward projecting front gables centrally positioned with a hipped 'wing' indented behind to either side. The ridges of the gables are lower than the main roof ridges.
4. This arrangement and especially articulation of the existing houses with their forward projecting gables form an identifiable pattern of existing development. It is locally distinctive and noticeable in public views in both directions along Homefield Rise and on the approach from the north, across open ground and in the vicinity of Lych Gate Road.
5. The appeal property has already been extended to the side at two storeys. It has a wide front elevation, including a second projecting gable connected at ground floor level by a lower 'central' hipped roof porch, flush with the front elevation of the house. The extended house nonetheless still respects and maintains the essential form and sequence of these houses along Homefield Rise, including the forward projecting gables.

6. The proposed development would infill the first floor recessed level of the appeal property, above the porch and between the two existing front projecting gables. It would introduce a third (centre) gable to the appeal property at two storey height, level with the front elevation of these two existing gables which would therefore no longer be 'projecting' or individually discernible. There would instead be a uniform plane to the entire front elevation of the appeal property without any indentation. The new gable would also have a slightly steeper roof pitch than the two existing gables and its ridge height would be taller than the two existing gable roofs, level with main roof ridge height.
7. As a result, the development would add significantly to the scale, massing and overall presence of the existing house. It would appear as an unduly dominant feature that would fundamentally alter the design and appearance of the house and be prominent and intrusive in public views. Thus, the proposal would fail to respect the character and appearance of the host dwelling and would be incongruous with its prevailing form.
8. The appeal property is already 'double fronted' with two gables and so differs from the single gable appearance of 32 Homefield Rise, which makes up the other half of this pair of semi-detached houses. However, the proposed higher third gable at the appeal property would unduly alter this existing association and cause a significant and visually intrusive imbalance in the overall appearance of these two houses. Furthermore, the resulting series of four gables connected in a line would also be at odds with the other houses along Homefield Rise and so would stand out as an unwelcome feature – a clear departure from local distinctiveness that would not be compatible with the surrounding area or contribute positively to the street scene.
9. I therefore conclude on the main issue that the proposal would cause harm to the host dwelling and the surrounding area, contrary to Policy 6 and Policy 37 of the Bromley Local Plan, January 2019. These policies seek to ensure that development is of a high standard of design, contributes positively to an existing street scene and that the scale and form of residential extensions should respect or complement a host dwelling and be compatible with development in the surrounding area. The proposal would also be contrary to paragraphs 124, 127(a)(b) and (c) and 130 of the National Planning Policy Framework, February 2019. These policies aspire to good design that is visually attractive, sympathetic to local character (including the surrounding built environment) and adds to the overall quality of an area. It would also be at odds with the guidance in the associated Planning Practice Guidance and the National Design Guide 2019.

Other Matters

10. I note that the proposal has been amended from a previously refused scheme, but I have considered the appeal proposal on its own planning merits. I also appreciate that spaces and gaps between buildings would not change, that views of heritage assets, skylines, landmarks or landscape features would not be obscured and that the scheme's proposed materials would match the property's existing materials. However, the absence of harm in these regards counts neither for, nor against the proposal and does not lead me to conclude differently in terms of the harm that I have identified in relation to the main issue above.

Conclusion

11. For the reasons given, the appeal is dismissed.

Robin Buchanan

INSPECTOR