
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 8 October 2020

by J D Westbrook BSc(Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 14 October 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/U2235/D/20/3253667

32 McAlpine Crescent, Loose, Maidstone, Kent, ME15 0AU

- 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 Ranjit Grewal against the decision of Maidstone Borough Council.
 - The application Ref:20/500518/FULL, dated 30 January 2020, was refused by notice dated 6 May 2020.
 - The development proposed is the construction of a side extension and a loft conversion.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue in this case is the effect of the proposed extensions on the character and appearance of the area around McAlpine Crescent

Reasons

3. 32 McAlpine Crescent is a small end-terraced bungalow at the head of a cul-de-sac. It forms the end of a short row of 4 dwellings and is bounded on its eastern side by a footpath that connects McAlpine Crescent with Herts Crescent and Linton Road. The footpath separates No 32 from No 33, which is a similar end-terraced bungalow. Both Nos 32 and 33 have plots with large triangular sections at the side and rear around the head of the cul-de-sac.
4. The proposed development would involve the construction of a side extension between the current side elevation and the eastern boundary of the plot. It would be part two-storey and part single-storey. The two-storey element would project some 3 metres beyond the existing side elevation and it would continue the current roof profile. The creation of the first floor would involve the construction of a large dormer extension in the roof space, extending the full width and almost the full height of the bungalow as extended. The single-storey element would have a triangular footprint and would run along the side boundary with the footpath beyond. It would have a flat roof and would have a height of 2.6 metres to the eaves.
5. The existing bungalow is small, consisting of a living room, kitchen, bedroom and bathroom. The ground-floor as extended would have a larger kitchen, a large storage room, and an enlarged bedroom to include a section for a carer. The first floor would have a master bedroom with en-suite and two further rooms of identical size – one shown as a bedroom and one as a home office.

6. McAlpine Crescent consists of a mix of bungalows and houses, none of which appear to have extensions. The proposed extensions at No 32 would match the existing bungalow and surrounding bungalows in terms of height and materials, but cumulatively they would result in a dwelling significantly out of character with its surroundings. The addition of the large full-width dormer, and the triangular-shaped single-storey side extension, would create a mass of development out of scale with the other bungalows in the vicinity. In addition, the single-storey extension, with its flat roof and its triangular shape, would appear incongruous in the context of the host dwelling and its surroundings.
7. The proposal would maintain the roofline of the existing dwelling and would appear largely in keeping when viewed from directly in front. However, when seen from the side and rear, especially from the adjacent footpath, the rear dormer would become visible as a more dominant feature. The overall impact of the proposals would be heightened by the existence of the single-storey extension which would result in a solid brick wall, some 2.6 metres high and over 7 metres long, running along the boundary. This would partially erode the visual gap between Nos 32 and 33 either side of the footpath, and would be an obtrusive feature in the context of the surrounding street scene.
8. The appellant notes that he is the carer for his wife. He also notes that his daughter is the owner of the house and that she would like to be able to look after her parents as they get older, but that there may be the need for a live-in carer in the future. I have a great deal of sympathy with this situation, but I am not convinced that the proposal as submitted is the only solution to the family's need for more space. On this basis, I do not consider that the personal circumstances described by the appellant outweigh the significant harm to the character and appearance of the area that would be caused by the proposal, which would result in an overly complex design and an incongruous and excessively dominant appearance within its surroundings.
9. For the above reasons, I find that the proposed dwelling would be significantly harmful to the established character and appearance of the area around McAlpine Crescent. On this basis, it would also conflict with relevant policies in the Maidstone Borough Local Plan. These include Policy DM1, which expects that proposals will positively respond to and, where appropriate, enhance the character of their surroundings, and Policy DM9 which requires the scale, height, form, appearance and siting of the proposal to fit unobtrusively with the existing building where retained, and the character of the street scene and/or its context. It would also conflict with provisions of the Loose Neighbourhood Plan 2019 (NP), which was prepared in conjunction with the Borough Council and passed independent examination following extensive consultation. Amongst other things, the NP requires that house extensions are to be sympathetic with the style of the host house (para 7.23).

Conclusion

10. I find that the proposed extensions would appear obtrusive and would be out of character with both the host property and the general tone of development around McAlpine Crescent. Accordingly, I dismiss this appeal.

J D Westbrook

INSPECTOR