



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 9 October 2020

by Baljit K Muston BA(Hons) PGDip MBA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 03 November 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/D5120/D/20/3251145

14 Rokesby Close, Welling DA16 3RR

- 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 T Paton against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Bexley.
 - The application Ref 20/00323/FUL, dated 7 February 2020, was refused by notice dated 3 April 2020.
 - The development proposed is a single storey rear extension, double storey side extension and a single storey front extension incorporating a porch.
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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 area.

Reasons

3. The appeal property is one of a number of semi-detached houses, dating from the middle of the last century, which make up Rokesby Close. A considerable number of these properties have been extended, many of which include a two storey (or first floor above the garage) extension to the side. A high proportion of these extensions have front elevations that are flush with the main house, although two, at Nos 10 and 11, are set back from the front elevation and down from the ridge of the roof.
4. It is clear from the Council's report that it does not object to the principle of a first floor side extension, but to the appeal proposal not including a setting back of the front elevation and setting down of the roof ridge. The Council's adopted Unitary Development Plan (2004) (UPD) includes some "*Design and Development Control Guidelines*". Guideline 2.3.3 (2) says that "*Two storey side or first floor extensions over existing accommodation should be designed to be subordinate to the main dwelling. Ideally this should incorporate a set-back of the front elevation of the extension. The roof plane of the extension should respect the roof plane of the original house, thereby lowering the ridge line*". It is this guidance that the Council has used to justify its refusal of this application.

5. The appellant argues that a large number of proposals with side extensions flush with the front wall have been permitted by the Council, and that some of these have been allowed recently. I was able to see a number of these, including all the examples in Rokesby Close, on my site visit. Each case must be determined on its own merits. However, I was able to see that many of these examples resulted in an extension that was not subordinate to the main dwelling. I have not been supplied with evidence relating to the reasoning behind these decisions, so cannot comment on why any of these extensions were permitted.
6. The Council's report refers to the extension at 10 Rokesby Close as an example of a first floor side extension that would be compliant with Council policies. I was also able to see this extension on my site visit. It was clear that the approach followed at No 10 results in an extension that does appear subordinate to the main house, and combined with a similar approach at No 11, respects the juxtaposition of the two dwellings.
7. No 15 Rokesby Close, adjacent to the appeal site, does include a two storey side extension set flush with the main house and in advance of No 14's front elevation. Were the appeal proposal to be constructed, the gap between the two properties at first floor level would be closed and the resulting built form, with neither extension appearing as subordinate to its respective main house, would appear unacceptably cramped. It would adversely affect the street scene and cause harm to the character and appearance of the area.
8. I understand the appellant's view that such a conclusion does not make sense when so many similar extensions already exist in the Close. However, to my mind, some of these other examples demonstrate the harm that such extensions can do to the character and appearance of the area. Their existence does not justify further development that I have identified as harmful.
9. The appellant has also set out what he fears may be the ramifications of redesigning the first floor extension on the layout of the extended front bedroom. However, I have not been provided with a proposed floor plan for an extension that includes a set back, and cannot give these fears any more than very limited weight.
10. I conclude that the proposal would have an adverse effect on the character and appearance of the area, contrary to Core Strategy Policy CS01, UDP Policies ENV39 and H9 and the UDP Design and Development Control Guidelines. These policies seek to ensure that, amongst other things, new development reflects existing character, is of high quality, and does not adversely affect the street scene.

Other matters

11. The Council has not raised any objections to the single storey rear extension or the porch extension at the front and I have no reason to disagree with those views. I have considered whether I could issue a split decision, to allow those elements of the proposal to proceed. However, I have come to the conclusion that these are all parts of one larger proposal, and that such an approach is not possible in this case.

Conclusion

12. For the reasons set out above, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Baljit K Muston

INSPECTOR