

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 27 October 2020

by R C Shrimplin MA(Cantab) DipArch RIBA FRTPI FCI Arb MCIL

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 12 November 2020

Appeal Reference: APP/K3605/D/20/3251734

Land at 86 Esher Road, East Molesey KT8 0AG

- 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 M Sherriff against the decision of Elmbridge Borough Council.
 - The application (reference 2020/0300, dated 20 October 2020) was refused by notice dated 24 April 2020.
 - The development proposed is described in the application form as "*proposed ground floor rear and side extension; proposed first floor extension; proposed roof redesign including raising of ridge and front and rear dormers*".
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main issues

2. There are three main issues in this appeal. The first is the effect of the proposed development on the character of the host building and its surroundings. The second is the effect of the proposed development on the residential amenities of neighbours (whether unacceptable harm would be caused by overbearing appearance or overshadowing). The third is the effect of the proposed development on flood risk.

Reasons

3. The appeal site is located in a suburban residential area, characterised by detached houses in traditional styles in good sized plots. The houses are built close to their side boundaries in many cases but the townscape is softened by trees in gardens and in the verges of Esher Road itself. Moreover, many of the existing houses have hipped roofs that help to minimise the visual impact of the closely built up frontages. In addition, there is a consistency of general design in the existing houses along the frontages of Esher Road, even though there is a considerable variation in the details.
4. On the other hand, of course, there are a number of examples of rather different forms, where older buildings have been extended and altered or even reconstructed to create houses that have gabled roofs. More obviously, some contemporary architectural designs are also to be found. Even so, these newer designs share the main characteristics of the original houses, in terms of their

scale and, crucially, their main roof pitches, supporting the harmonious appearance off the locality.

5. The appeal site itself, at number 86 Esher Road, is occupied by a detached house that is similar to others in the frontage, with a hipped tiled roof above two-storey rendered elevations, with architectural features including a projecting two-storey bay and a decorative brickwork archway that picks out the principal entrance. The house stands behind mature trees within the frontage and the highway verge. Like its neighbours, it has a good-sized back garden and it has a smaller front garden that sets the building itself back from the highway, with space for car parking.
6. It is now proposed that the existing house should be considerably altered and extended by the construction of extensions on the ground floor (at the side and rear of the existing house) and first floor, and by remodelling the roof form and structure.
7. The 'National Planning Policy Framework' (which was revised in February 2019) emphasises the aim of "achieving well designed places" in the broadest sense (notably at Section 12), while making effective use of land and encouraging economic activity. It is aimed at achieving good design standards generally, which includes protecting existing residential amenities as well as providing good standards of accommodation.
8. An emphasis on the importance of good design is also to be found in the Development Plan, notably at Policy DM2 of the 'Elmbridge Local Plan Development Management Plan' (dated April 2015), which includes the aim of preserving or enhancing the surroundings and also of protecting neighbours' residential amenities. Similarly, Policy CS17 of the 'Elmbridge Core Strategy' (dated July 2011) is intended to promote well designed development, while making good use of urban land.
9. The Council's 'Design and Character Supplementary Planning Document', (dating from 2012) is also relevant, though it does not have the same force as Policies in the Development Plan.
10. In this case, it is proposed that the roof structure should be significantly increased in height, with more steeply pitched roofs around a flat roofed central portion. In addition, the front and rear roof slopes would each incorporate two substantial rectangular dormers, projecting beyond the main roof. The finished house would have four large bedrooms on the first and second floors (with other facilities) and a large open living, dining and kitchen area on the ground floor, with a separate reception room and other ancillary spaces.
11. This new roof form would be very different from other roofs in the locality, because of its bulk, the steep roof pitches and its overall proportions. The finished building would be awkward and ungainly in the streetscene and would greatly harm the restrained residential character of the area. The proposed design would be visually obtrusive and the completed house would clearly fail to achieve the high design standards that are envisaged in the planning policies. In consequence, the scheme cannot be allowed.

12. The bulk of the extensions overall would also have an effect on the neighbours at number 88 Esher Road. The volume of the new roof and first floor extension would extend beyond the rear of the neighbouring house, although it would be inset from the side boundary. The single storey side extension, topped by a flat roof behind parapet walls, would have a greater impact, being built on the boundary. This side extension would lie to the north of the neighbouring property and would not, therefore, cause any material direct overshadowing, although it would be somewhat overbearing.
13. Even so, and bearing in mind the suburban character of the area, building up to the boundary can be acceptable, of course. In any case, it has been indicated by the appellant that this part of the design could have been amended to reduce the impact on the neighbour and it seems likely that an acceptable solution for this part of the design could have been achieved (which would also incorporate a suitable detail for rainwater drainage).
14. Policy CS26 of the 'Elmbridge Core Strategy' deals with the issue of Flooding and has the objective to "reduce the overall and local risk of flooding" in the Borough.
15. The submissions that have been presented in relation to flood risk are somewhat limited in this appeal, although the site lies within Flood Zone 2. Nevertheless, it is apparent that the application proposes only a limited extension to the existing ground level footprint of the existing house and that, if the scheme had been otherwise acceptable, conditions might have been imposed to mitigate any potential risk.
16. Evidently, the appeal site lies within an established urban area, which is "sustainable" in planning terms, and the proposed development would make a useful addition to the existing house. Nevertheless, I am convinced that the harm that would be done to the architectural qualities of the existing house and to the streetscene outweigh the benefits of the project. There would be a limited impact on neighbours' amenities but, although this objection and the need for possible flood risk mitigation might not otherwise have been sufficient to justify refusing the appeal, the harm to the character and appearance of the existing house itself, and hence to its surroundings, would be clearly unacceptable in planning terms.
17. Thus, I have concluded that the design objection that I have identified, is fundamental to the appeal and that the scheme before me would conflict with both national and local planning policies (including the Development Plan). It ought not to be allowed, therefore, and, although I have considered all the matters that have been raised in the representations, I have found nothing to cause me to alter my decision.

Roger C Shrimplin

INSPECTOR