

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 20 November 2020

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

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 14 December 2020

Appeal Reference: APP/K2230/D/20/3251479

94 Christianfields Avenue, Gravesend, Kent DA12 5NW

- 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 Miss Kaur against the decision of Gravesend Borough Council.
 - The application (reference 20200002, dated 31 December 2019) was refused by notice dated 27 February 2020.
 - The development proposed is described in the application form as "*construction of a rear addition to serve as an accessible bedroom to achieve ground floor living; access to the garden will be maintained via a new single door within the living room*".
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary points

2. Notwithstanding the description of the application that was given in the application form, the nature of the proposal can more clearly be expressed as set out in both the refusal notice and the appeal form, as the erection of a single storey rear extension.

Main issues

3. The main issue to be determined in this appeal is whether the scheme would provide satisfactory living conditions for occupiers of the finished house.

Reasons

4. The appeal site is located in a modern residential area where the houses have been designed in a contemporary image, but using predominantly conventional materials. The layout of the houses in Christianfields Avenue makes provision for car parking either side of the road (with its footpaths), creating a spacious environment but making the streetscene rather hard in appearance, since there is a lack of mature trees and other planting.
5. The locality features a mixture of predominantly two-storey and three-storey terraced houses and Number 94 Christianfields Avenue is within a three-storey section. It is mainly faced with brickwork, with rendering at high level under a pitched roof. The house has the benefit of a narrow back garden, similar to

- others nearby and, at present, some timber constructions encroach into the garden from the rear of the brick-built house.
6. It is now proposed to add a single-storey extension to the rear of the ground floor of the house, in order to provide a new bedroom.
 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 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 CS19 of the 'Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy' (adopted in September 2014), which points out the importance of safeguarding the amenity of future occupants.
 9. In addition, the Council's Supplementary Planning Guidance on 'Residential Layout Guidelines' is still relevant (although it dates from 1996) and it includes guidance on natural lighting and garden sizes.
 10. The proposed extension at number 94 Christianfields Avenue would provide a useful new bedroom. On the other hand, the living room at the rear of the building would be cut off from the garden. The back garden would be reached from the house by a door (marked as being 900 millimetres wide) and a narrow side access (marked as being 780 millimetres wide), adjacent to the side wall of the new bedroom. The garden itself would evidently be reduced significantly in area, by comparison with that envisaged in the original layout.
 11. As a result of the construction of the new bedroom, the main living room in the existing house would, effectively, be cut off from the garden, with only a narrow footway as an access. The living space itself would be gloomy and unattractive, lacking natural light, even if a glazed or partially glazed external door were to be fitted. Indeed, the existing timber constructions (referred to above) already demonstrate this effect). In addition, the garden area would be diminished and would be significantly less attractive and useful.
 12. In consequence, the proposed extension would have a markedly negative impact on the amenity and quality of the house overall, reducing the amenity for occupants of the finished house and creating an unsatisfactory dwelling. Hence, I have concluded that the scheme before me would conflict with both national and local planning policies (including the Development Plan) and that it ought not to be allowed. 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