The Planning Inspectorate

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 30 November 2020

by David Fitzsimon MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government

Decision date: 21 December 2020.

Appeal Ref: APP/C5690/W/20/3252773
206 Farmfield Road, Bromley BR1 4NP

- 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 Bharadia against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Lewisham.
- The application Ref DC/19/113887, dated 3 October 2019, was refused by notice dated 12 December 2019.
- The development proposed is a 'new 3 bed dwelling on land adjacent to 206 Farmfield Road, with alterations to the existing property including repositioning the front door and erecting a single storey rear extension'.

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues in this case are the effect of the proposed dwelling on the character and appearance of the street scene along with the effect of the proposed single storey rear extension on the character and appearance of the host dwelling.

Reasons

Street scene

3. The appeal relates in part to the side garden of an end of terrace property, which sits on the corner of Farmfield Road and one its recessed small cul-de-sacs. Farmfield Road is home to similar dwellings, with the side gardens of the end of terrace properties and the small cul-de-sacs providing an important visual break from the rows of terraces themselves. This general uniformity of arrangement and form is a noticeable element of the overall character and appearance of the street.

4. The proposal seeks to add a dwelling to the end of the existing terrace. The design of the proposed dwelling would replicate the scale and form of the host dwelling and it would be finished in appropriate external materials. However, the proposed dwelling would noticeably reduce the gap at the junction and imbalance the symmetry of the street scene either side of it. The reduced gap and imbalancing effect would be very noticeable and widely visible from the public domain. The overall effect would not respond positively to the established pattern and arrangement of built development and the overall character and appearance of the street scene would be unacceptably harmed as a result.

5. In such terms, the development proposed conflicts with Objective 10, Spatial Policy 5 and Core Strategy Policy 15 of the adopted Lewisham Local Development Framework Core Strategy, along with policies 30 and 33 of the LP which collectively promote high quality design which responds appropriately to local distinctiveness including plot widths, open spaces and the alignment of existing streets.

Existing dwelling

6. The proposal includes a single storey extension to the rear of the host property. The extension would span the full width of the existing dwelling. It would have a mono-pitch roof which would sit just under the first floor window sills and it would project some 3 metres from the main rear elevation.

7. To my mind, the overall design and scale of the proposed extension is typical of many rear additions and it would sit comfortably at the rear of the host dwelling. Furthermore, as the Council concedes, it would fall within the provisions of 'permitted development'. To this end, I am satisfied the overall scale, height and position of the proposed extension would ensure that it appeared subservient to the host dwelling and it would not unduly harm the living conditions of the occupiers of the adjacent dwelling either. In such terms, there would be no conflict with policies 30 and 31 of the Council's adopted Development Management Local Plan (LP) or its adopted Supplementary Planning Document titled '*Alterations and Extensions*'.

Other considerations

8. The proposed dwelling would not be as wide as the scheme which a colleague Inspector recently found to be unacceptable (Ref. APP/C5690/W/19/3233821). Be that as it may, I have considered the proposal on its individual merits and found it to be visually harmful for the reasons outlined above.

9. In reaching my decision, I am mindful of the presence of at least one broadly similar development within the immediate area at No. 142A Farmfield Road. Whilst I do not know the precise circumstances behind this development, it only reinforces my concerns about the loss of important breaks in built form within this particular street scene.

10. I have also considered the appeal decision relating to No. 137 Moorside Road, Bromley (Ref. APP/C5690/W/19/3223505) where my colleague Inspector observed that '*whilst rows are predominantly in blocks of 6, 8 or 10 the introduction of another dwelling would not be incongruous to the area as the number of properties in each block is not an obvious feature in the streetscape*'. My colleague also observed that '*there are also examples of blocks not conforming to this pattern nearby*'. I understand that planning permission has since been granted for a dwelling at this site. However, this site is within an entirely different street scene and it has different relationships to its surroundings than the appeal site. Accordingly, it is not a directly comparable situation and therefore I attach limited weight to it as a material consideration.

11. The site enjoys a sustainable urban location and I appreciate the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) encourages the effective use of land. The Appellant also refers to the New London Plan (NLP), which although not formally adopted, is at an advanced stage. The NLP highlights the pressing

need for more homes in London, encouraging much greater use of small sites across the capital through the '*Good Growth*' objectives for sustainable development. There is no dispute that the thrust of these documents is to increase the delivery of new housing and maximise the efficient and effective use of urban land. Specifically, Policy H2 of the NLP indicates that small sites should play a much greater role in housing delivery and directs that Boroughs should proactively support well-designed new homes on small sites in order, amongst other matters, to significantly increase the contribution of small sites to meeting London's housing needs.

12. The Appellant asserts that the NLP renders the Council's Development Plan policies out of date; particularly policy DM33 of the adopted Development Management Local Plan (LP) which relates to development on infill sites, backland sites, back gardens and amenity areas. Whilst the NLP does indicate that flexibility and creativity should be adopted when looking at the capacity of urban environments to accommodate additional dwellings, neither this draft Plan, nor the NPPF for that matter, suggest that the construction of new homes should be at the cost of good design.

13. To this end, I am satisfied that policy DM33, which amongst other considerations, seeks to ensure that development is of the highest design quality and relates successfully and is sensitive to the existing design quality of the streetscape, remains relevant to this particular proposal. I have explained why I consider that the proposed dwelling would not sit comfortably within the street scene and as a result, it follows that it does not amount to good design. The NPPF explains that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development. On this basis, it also follows that the proposal does not amount to sustainable development in the widest sense of the definition.

14. Finally, the Appellant asserts that the proposal would generate economic benefits during both the construction phase for tradesmen and the supply chain, but also in the longer term through Community Infrastructure Levy revenue and Council Tax payments. These are tangible benefits and I appreciate that the cumulative benefits of such projects can be significant. Nevertheless, when considered in isolation, the economic benefits of what amounts to a small scheme would be limited and I am of the opinion that they would not outweigh the identified harm in this particular instance.

Overall Conclusions

15. Although the rear extension is acceptable in all respects, the proposed dwelling would harm the character and appearance of the street scene, contrary to the development plan policies outlined above.

16. The arguments advanced by the Appellant do not outweigh this harm and policy conflict therefore the appeal does not succeed.

David Fitzsimon

INSPECTOR