

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: 08 January 2021.

Appeal Reference: APP/T2215/D/20/3248745 Land at 4 Sycamore Road, Dartford, Kent DA1 2QS

- 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 Chowdhury against the decision of Dartford Borough Council.
 - The application (reference DA/19/01729/FUL, dated 31 December 2020) was refused by notice dated 19 February 2020.
 - The development proposed is described in the application form as a “two-storey side extension”.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for a “two-storey side extension”, at 4 Sycamore Road, Dartford, Kent DA1 2QS, in accordance with the terms of the application (reference DA/19/01729/FUL, dated 31 December 2020), subject to the conditions set out in the attached Schedule of Conditions.

Main issue

2. The main issue to be determined in this appeal is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

3. The appeal site lies within an established residential area of Dartford that is characterised by conventional houses, typically arranged in semi-detached pairs and short terraces, in a more or less regular street pattern. Although there are some variations, houses are generally finished with rendered walls under hipped roofs in traditional forms. The area slopes considerably, however, and the buildings are stepped throughout the layout, to accommodate changes in ground level.
4. Number 4 Sycamore Road stands at the junction of Sycamore Road and Willow Road, on the north-west corner of the junction, where the ground rises away from the crossroads. The existing house is a two-storey semi-detached house, with a front projection that incorporates a porch and part of a “study”. The house is rendered and painted, with a hipped main roof of slate, like its neighbours. Because of the sharp incline in the ground level on Sycamore Road, number 4 is set rather lower than its adjoining neighbour at number 2, with a pronounced break in the line of the main roof, creating a staggered

- elevation to the road frontage, with side additions helping to articulate the elevation.
5. The rear garden of number 4 is quite small in area and is triangular in shape to accommodate the street layout at the intersection of Sycamore Road and Willow Road. Its front garden is relatively large, however, and it provides some off-street parking spaces for the house, though its overall appearance is rather bare. The conjunction of residential frontages at the crossroads makes for a greater sense of openness at this point in the streetscene, but this effect is not especially significant as a townscape feature, in my view.
 6. It is now proposed that that a two-storey side extension should be added to the existing house, extending the house across its own front garden towards the diagonal boundary with the neighbouring property at number 199 Willow Road.
 7. The 'National Planning Policy Framework' (which was revised in February 2019) has the aim of making effective use of land and encouraging economic activity but it also 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 and 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 Policies DP2 and DP7 of the 'Dartford Development Policies Plan' (which was adopted in July 2017). Policy DP2 points out the need to have regard to various considerations, in appraising the relationship of proposed new development to "neighbouring buildings as well as the wider locality". Policy DP7 includes specific design criteria for residential extensions and provides, among other things, that proposed extensions should not be "visually obtrusive" and that "existing significant landscape features" should be maintained.
 9. The proposed extension would continue the architectural style of the existing house, with a set-back at first floor level but extending the existing single storey front projection, binding the different parts of the design together. Moreover, the setback at first floor level and the continuation of a single storey feature on the front elevation would mitigate the bulk of the finished building by further articulating the design. The new extension would not be overly dominant or overbearing in relation to the existing building, while the symmetry implicit in the original design concept was broken, in any case, in order to accommodate the slope of the natural contours.
 10. In addition, the materials to be used in the construction of the proposed extension would match those of the existing house to maintain its character, which is a matter that can be controlled by the imposition of a suitable condition, of course. Thus the finished building would be in harmony with the surrounding development, in my view.
 11. The extension would extend across the garden towards the line of the frontage at Willow Road but it would not encroach upon the openness of the corner space at the crossroads to an extent that would cause unacceptable harm to the wider townscape or to the setting of the houses in the immediate vicinity.

Indeed, the remaining front garden at number 4 would still be of sufficient size to provide scope for additional landscaping.

12. In their submissions, the local planning authority have proposed that a condition should be imposed to require the provision of two parking spaces within the front garden (which I accept would be necessary) and some redesigning of this space will evidently be needed. The treatment of the front garden in conjunction with the provision of parking spaces could have a real impact on the quality of the surroundings and it would be essential, therefore, to ensure that a good landscaping scheme, incorporating the car parking provision, is achieved for the finished project. Again, a suitable condition is necessary.
13. Turning to other matters, I have also considered the impact of the proposed development on the living conditions of the neighbour at number 199 Willow Road. The proposed extension would be located to the east of the neighbouring plot (and to the south of the existing house on the appeal site) and it would not materially worsen any existing overshadowing or loss of light. Both the appeal site and number 199 Willow Road have small triangular back gardens that are overlooked by others (as do a number of other plots in the original layout), and, again, the proposed layout will not significantly worsen the situation. I have concluded, therefore, that the impact of the proposed extension on living conditions at the neighbouring house do not justify an outright refusal of planning permission in this case.
14. On the other hand, I accept that there could be a reasonable perception of increased overlooking that would be felt to be intrusive and, for that reason, I have formed the opinion that it is necessary for a condition to be imposed, to require the use of obscured glazing (which would need to be of a good standard) for the rear window at first floor level in the proposed extension. I have noted, in any case, that the proposed new bedroom would be well served by windows on the front elevation of the house and that the requirement to use obscured glazing for the rear window would not create poor living conditions in the new extension.
15. Evidently, the appeal site lies within an established urban area, which is "sustainable" in planning terms, and the proposed extension would be a useful addition to the accommodation at 4 Sycamore Road. The contribution that the appeal scheme would make to the provision of residential accommodation in the locality, even though it would be limited, weighs in favour of the appeal. The design of the proposed extension would be in keeping with the host building and its surroundings and the finished scheme would not cause unacceptable harm to the character and appearance of the area.
16. The locality is not within a Conservation Area and is not subject to any such special level of control. Hence, I have concluded that the project would not be in conflict with the Development Plan, in principle, and I am persuaded that the scheme before me can properly be permitted, subject to conditions. 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.
17. I have, however, also considered the need for conditions and, in imposing conditions, I have taken account of the conditions suggested by the Council in

the usual way (without prejudice to their main arguments in the appeal), subject to modifications necessary, in my opinion, in the interests of clarity and simplicity. I have concluded that conditions are necessary, to define the planning permission and to ensure that quality is maintained and I have also imposed conditions to deal with matters that have been identified elsewhere in this Decision.

Roger C Shrimplin

INSPECTOR

SCHEDULE OF CONDITIONS.

1. The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this decision.
2. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved drawings:
 - unnumbered Ordnance Survey site location plan (1:1250);
 - drawing number 6187/1 ("Existing Layout");
 - drawing number 6187/50 ("Two Storey Side Extension").
3. The materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of the development hereby permitted shall match those used in the existing building.
4. Prior to first occupation of the extension hereby permitted, full details of both hard and soft landscape works shall have been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. All these works shall be carried out as finally approved in detail. The details to be submitted shall include proposed and existing finished levels, means of enclosure and functional services above and below ground. The details of the hard landscape works shall include details of provision for car parking for at least two cars (including surface materials), boundary treatment, refuse storage and access design.
5. All hard and soft landscape works shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details. The works shall be carried out prior to the occupation of the extension hereby permitted or in accordance with the implementation programme approved by the local planning authority. Any trees or plants which within a period of five years from the completion of the development die, are removed or become seriously damaged or diseased shall be replaced in the next planting season with others of similar size and species, unless the local planning authority gives written consent to any variation.
6. Prior to first occupation of the extension hereby permitted, the area shown on the landscaping scheme as a vehicle parking and manoeuvring area shall be laid out and brought into use as such. It shall be retained and used for no other purpose thereafter.
7. The extension hereby permitted shall not be occupied until the proposed window at first floor level in the west (rear) elevation of the extension has been fitted with obscured glazing, and no part of that window that is less than 1.7 metres above the floor of the room in which it is installed shall be capable of being opened. Details of the type of obscured glazing shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority before the window is installed and once installed the obscured glazing shall be retained thereafter.