



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 9 December 2020

by Elizabeth Lawrence BTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 08 January 2021.

Appeal Ref: APP/A2280/D/20/3259677

39 Vicarage Close, Halling, Rochester, ME2 1BH

- 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 Joe Francis against the decision of Medway Council.
 - The application Ref MC/20/1713, dated 9 July 2020, was refused by notice dated 9 September 2020.
 - The development proposed is for a two storey side extension, single storey rear extension and loft conversion.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary matter

2. The appellant's agent has confirmed that if the barn hip on the proposed two storey side extension were a contentious issue it could be replaced with a full gable. Also, that this would be preferable for the appellant due to its lower cost. However, no revised drawings have been submitted and neither the Council nor third parties have had the opportunity to comment on this suggested design change. As a consequence, it is not something I can take into account and this decision is based purely on the scheme determined by the council.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the host property, the pair of semi-detached dwellings and the street scene.

Reasons

4. Vicarage Close is characterised by rows of semi-detached and small terraces of uniformly designed two storey dwellings from a limited range of designs and materials. There is a strong sense of symmetry in the siting and design of the dwellings, which have a combination of front facing gables and gable or hipped roofs to the side. The dwellings with hipped roofs have modest side projections with catslide roofs which form a continuation of the hipped roofs. This consistency in roof designs makes a strong contribution to the character and appearance of the rows of dwellings and the street scene.
5. A few of the dwellings in Vicarage Close have two storey side extensions with gable roofs and this includes one of the pair of semi-detached houses sited

- opposite the appeal site. These extensions have been added to dwellings which originally had gable roofs.
6. Policy BNE1 of the Medway Local Plan 2003 (LP) requires the design of extensions to be appropriate in relation to the character, appearance and functioning of the built environment, including scale, mass, proportions, materials, layout and siting. Extensions should respect the scale and appearance of the surrounding area.
 7. This is consistent with paragraphs 124 and 127 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) which amongst other things states that new development should be sympathetic to local character, including the built environment and landscape setting. It should maintain a strong sense of place, add to the overall quality of the area and optimise the potential of the site.
 8. The appeal property and the attached house at 40 Vicarage Close (No.40) are the only pair of semi-detached houses with catslide roofs in this part of Vicarage Close. The other dwellings in this small cul-de-sac and most of the central part of Vicarage Close have gable ends. The appeal dwelling and No.40 are located at the end of the small cul-de-sac, where they are set back from the front building line of the dwellings to the east and at right angles to the dwellings to the northwest. As a result, the eastern side of the appeal dwelling is screened by the adjacent dwelling at 36 Vicarage Close (No.36), when approaching from the east. The hipped and catslide roof of the appeal dwelling is however clearly visible from the turning area at the end of this small cul-de-sac. From here the hipped and catslide roof is dominated by the gable end of the dwelling at No.40.
 9. The roof of the appeal dwelling is also visible across the rear gardens of the dwellings to the east, when viewed from the main central part of Vicarage Close. In this view the dominant roof form includes side gables.
 10. The appellant has confirmed that planning permission has recently been granted for a hip to gable roof extension to the appeal dwelling, which would retain the catslide roof below the main eaves level. Whilst this would unbalance the appearance of the pair of dwellings, their symmetry is only appreciated in very limited views. Also, the proposed gable roof would respect and relate visually to the gable ends on the adjacent and surrounding buildings.
 11. With the proposal the existing catslide roof would be replaced with a barn hip roof, which is not a feature found within Vicarage Close. Also, unlike the existing catslide roofs, which reduce the eaves lines at the sides of the dwellings, the proposed barn hip would result in an uncharacteristically high eaves line at the side of the dwelling. This would result in the side extension appearing incongruous. Not only would the side extension unbalance the pair of dwellings, it would appear totally out of keeping with the gabled roofs in this small cul-de-sac and the main central part of Vicarage Close.
 12. Whilst the proposed loss of the existing catslide roof projection at the side of the appeal dwelling would also detract from the symmetry of the pair of dwellings I am less concerned about this. This is because, the catslide roof is dominated by the gable wall at No.40; the pair of dwellings occupy a recessed position at the end of the row; and the surrounding buildings all have gable ends.

13. The proposal also includes a flat roofed dormer extension and an irregular shaped single storey rear extension. The dormer extension would be similar in design to others found in the local area and the flat roofed rear extension would be modest in form and appearance and would respect the uncluttered horizontal lines of the rear of the host dwelling. As a result, subject to the use of matching materials, these elements of the proposal would be in keeping with the host property and would be readily assimilated into their surroundings.
14. Notwithstanding this, the harm that would be caused by the proposed two storey side extension weighs heavily against the proposal. In addition, whilst the benefits for the appellant and their family that would result from the extended and upgraded accommodation are acknowledged, it would not outweigh the identified harm that would be caused to the pair of dwellings and the street scene. It is not a matter that could be satisfactorily dealt with by conditions.
15. Finally, in view of my conclusions in relation to the dormer window and single storey extension, I have considered the possibility of issuing a split decision. This is not possible in this instance because both the dormer window and rear extension are designed and sited to be physically attached to the proposed side extension.
16. I conclude that the proposal would unacceptably harm the character and appearance of the host dwelling, the pair of dwellings and the street scene. Accordingly, it would conflict with LP policy BNE1 and paragraphs 124 and 127 of the Framework.

Elizabeth Lawrence

INSPECTOR