
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/H2265/D/20/3258058

Land at 21 Roberts Road, Snodland ME6 5HL

- 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 J Butterfield against the decision of Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council.
 - The application (reference TM/20/01041/FL, dated 19 May 2020) was refused by notice dated 21 July 2020.
 - The development proposed is described in the application form as “addition of second storey to application already approved for side extension; now incorporating garage, toilet and utility on the ground floor, additional bedroom and en-suite on the first floor”.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for the “addition of second storey to application already approved for side extension; now incorporating garage, toilet and utility on the ground floor, additional bedroom and en-suite on the first floor”, at 21 Roberts Road, Snodland ME6 5HL, in accordance with the terms of the application (reference TM/20/01041/FL, dated 19 May 2020), subject to the following 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:
 - drawing number 1 (Existing Site Plans and Floor Plans);
 - drawing number 2 (Existing Elevations);
 - drawing number 3 (Proposed Elevations);
 - drawing number 4 (Proposed Site Plans and Floor Plans).
 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.

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 its surroundings.

Reasons

3. The appeal site is located in a residential suburb of Snodland, which is characterised by traditional dwellings of various types, including bungalows and two-storey houses, in a conventional layout that is not strictly geometric.
4. Number 21 Roberts Road is a semi-detached house at the junction of Roberts Road and Godden Road. It is a two-storey building of brickwork, under a tiled roof, with decorative tiled and rendered panels on the principal elevations. The property has the benefit of a modest private garden at the rear and a small front garden that extends around the side of the building on the Godden Road frontage.
5. There is a large outbuilding at the rear of the existing house, which appears to be occupied as habitable accommodation. Indeed, planning permission has been granted previously for a single-storey side extension to the existing house, in conjunction with the construction of an outbuilding for residential use as an annexe to the main house. The side extension that was permitted has not yet been built but this element is an important material consideration in this appeal, nonetheless.
6. It is now proposed to construct the previously approved single-storey extension and to add a second storey at first floor level. The additional floorspace at first floor level would provide an additional bedroom and en-suite accommodation, together with a smaller bedroom replacing that which would be lost by the creation of an access to the new extension (across a wide landing). The application proposal drawing shows a total of four bedrooms on the first floor, including existing rooms.
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 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 Policy CP24 of the 'Tonbridge and Malling Core Strategy' (which was adopted by the Council on 25 September 2007) and Policy SQ1 of the Council's 'Managing Development and the Environment Development Plan Document' (which was adopted in April 2010). In particular, these Policies point out the need for new development to have regard to its surroundings.
9. The Council's 'Snodland Character Areas Supplementary Planning Document' (which was adopted in July 2011) is also relevant, though it does not have the same force as Policies in the Development Plan. A section on the Godden Road area, which includes Roberts Road, notes that houses are generally two-storey in scale, set back behind their front gardens.
10. As noted above, a significant development scheme has already been permitted at the appeal site and that project has been partially completed by the construction of a detached residential annexe.

11. Now, however, it is proposed that a two-storey extension should be erected at the side of number 21 Roberts Road, in place of the single-storey extension that has already been permitted. The extension would continue the main roof of the existing house, without adopting a "subserving" reduction in its height or depth, but the finished scheme would be architecturally satisfactory in itself. The design would be in keeping with other buildings in the surrounding area and the inclusion of decorative vertical tiling would accord with the detailing of the existing building. In short, the proposed extension would create a finished building that would be in harmony with its surroundings.
12. It is true, of course, that the finished building would extend closer to the highway boundary in Godden Road than other buildings on the Godden Road frontages. Nevertheless, Godden Road and Roberts Road have some variety in their frontages, as a result of the irregular layout and the sloping ground, which creates visual interest in the streetscene and adds to the character of the area. Over the years, properties have been altered and extended, further increasing the diversification of the townscape.
13. In this case, the proposed extension would have an impact on long views along Godden Road but the location is not so sensitive that the proposed change would cause significant harm to the quality of the surroundings. Indeed, variety in the streetscene may be considered to be an asset rather than the opposite. Besides, it is to be noted that the frontage of the plot on Roberts Road would be more intensively used in the future anyway, once the development that has already been permitted has been completed.
14. In short, I have concluded that the proposed extension at first floor level would be of a good design in itself and that it would not materially harm the character or appearance of the surroundings more widely.
15. Evidently, the appeal site lies within an established urban area, which is "sustainable" in planning terms, and the proposed extension would make a useful addition to the accommodation at number 21 Roberts 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. Moreover, I have formed the opinion that the project would be acceptable in planning terms and that it would not be in conflict with the Development Plan, in principle. In short, I am persuaded that the scheme before me can properly be permitted, 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.
16. 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). Conditions are necessary, to define the planning permission and to ensure that quality is maintained.
17. In reaching my decision, I have been conscious that construction projects inevitably have some impact on neighbours while the works are being undertaken. I have therefore considered whether additional conditions are required, to control the works themselves, for example by limiting the hours when building work may be carried out. In this case, however, I am aware

that the proposed extension would involve relatively small scale building operations, on that part of the existing house that is furthest way from its adjoining neighbour. In my view, therefore, the imposition of additional conditions to deal with the execution of site works is unnecessary on this occasion.

Roger C Shrimplin

INSPECTOR