



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 26 January 2021

by Patrick Whelan BA(Hons) Dip Arch MA MSc ARB RIBA RTPi

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 8 February 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/K2230/D/20/3261573

33 Artillery Row, Gravesend DA12 1LY

- 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 & Mrs J Bhanot against the decision of Gravesham Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 20200729, dated 23 July 2020, was refused by notice dated 21 September 2020.
 - The development proposed is two storey front and rear extensions being a revision to permission 20190260 allowed on appeal.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Application for costs

2. An application for costs was made by Mr & Mrs J Bhanot against Gravesham Borough Council. This application is the subject of a separate Decision.

Main issue

3. This is the effect of the first-floor section of the proposed front extension on the appearance of the house, the terrace of which it is a part, and the character of the surrounding area.

Reasons

4. This is a late C20 housing development where the houses are clustered in short terraces around informal courts and cul-de-sacs, leaving relatively short front and back gardens. The houses have been carefully laid-out with controlled variations in building line, footprint, height, and orientation. As well as providing architectural variety, these ordered features model the houses with shadows and depth, and they introduce different layers and textures to enrich the enclosure of the spaces between the houses and the streets.
 5. In this spatial context, the buildings have a strong bearing on the street scene, and the spaces they enclose are sensitive to change. While successfully designed buildings can adapt and change over time, retaining the characteristics of the pattern of development which makes this a place to enjoy living in, is important.
 6. No 33 is the central house in a terrace of three. Enclosing a small parking court to its front, it shares, with No 31 to its left, a front elevation under a long, continuous, pitched roof. Integral garages and living space in this pair
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project forward of the upper floors. A section of the flank wall of the house to its right is set staggered forward of the line of the pair.

7. The wide, gabled form of the front extension would not be incompatible in this area where gables appear more common than hipped roofs, though unlike this proposal, from what I saw they tend to be finished with verges rather than bargeboards. The materials and windows would reflect those in the terrace.
8. However, notwithstanding the form of the extension's roof, infilling the full-width of the space above the front build-out to the front line of No 35 would effectively bring the mid-section of the terrace forward, breaking the continuity of the first floor wall and the roof across the pair, and introducing an odd feature of a first floor springing from half-way up the roof of a ground floor build-out.
9. The proposed front extension, at first floor, would appear as an incongruous, projecting intrusion in the elevation, diminishing the architectural order of the arrangement of the terrace, a key architectural characteristic of the pattern of development of the area. It would undermine the simple architectural coherence of the area where the siting of houses follows an ordered pattern, and walls tend not to spring from halfway up roofs.
10. The proposal would conflict with policy CS19 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy 2014 where it requires development to make a positive contribution to the street scene and the character of the area, taking account of building lines, layout and other architectural features of adjoining buildings and the features of townscape which contribute to the local character and sense of place.
11. It would also be at odds with the National Planning Policy Framework¹ which indicates that developments should be visually attractive as a result of good architecture and should be sympathetic to local character including the surrounding built environment. The overall effect of the development would be to undermine the coherent identity of the place, which is a key characteristic of place set out in the National Design Guide², and which makes this area distinctive.
12. I have taken into account the appeal³ allowed for similar development on this site. However, in that proposal the front extension at first floor extended less than half the width of the house, whereas in this proposal it would extend full-width. The spatial effect I have identified is proportionately greater in this case. I appreciate that the proposal would enlarge the accommodation in the house, which is a social benefit. Building works may stimulate the local economy. However, this does not outweigh the environmental harm I have found.

Conclusion

13. The appeal is dismissed.

Patrick Whelan

INSPECTOR

¹ National Planning Policy Framework, paragraph 127

² National Design Guide, paragraph 57

³ Appeal Ref: APP/K2230/D/20/3245085