



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 9 February 2021

by John D Allan BA(Hons) BTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 26 February 2021.

Appeal Ref: APP/Q3820/W/20/3263457

76 Dower Walk, Gossops Green, Crawley, West Sussex RH11 8HY

- 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 Alan Seymour against the decision of Crawley Borough Council.
 - The application Ref CR/2020/0089/FUL, dated 10 February 2020, was refused by notice dated 30 September 2020.
 - The development proposed is the erection of single-storey extensions to front and rear, plus two-storey extension to side.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are the effect of the proposal on: -
 - the character and appearance of the area;
 - the living conditions at 74 Dower Walk, with particular regard to visual impact and light; and
 - the living conditions at 67 Buckswood Drive, with particular regard to visual impact and privacy.

Reasons

Character and Appearance

3. The appeal property is a two-storey, semi-detached dwelling at the end of a row of similar properties. It is part of the wider Gossops Green residential neighbourhood characterised by principally semi-detached and terraced early post war housing. The architecture of the area is distinctive of its time, simple in style and detailing, and largely unaltered from its original concept. One distinguishing feature that remains on a significant majority of properties is a simple canopy over the dwellings' front doors. In some cases these are flat, in

others they are curved. In common with a number of examples that have been drawn to my attention, and which were apparent to me on my visit, the appeal property has replaced its curved canopy with a lean-to enclosed porch. Some of these changes in the area appear modest, whilst others are much less sympathetic to the original design of the houses. Nevertheless, based upon my own observations, they are not so prevalent so as to have changed the broadly consistent and unifying simplistic character of the surrounding built environment.

4. The proposal effectively amounts to a two-storey side addition with single-storey elements to the front and rear that would wrap around the existing dwelling. Part 3 of the Council's *Urban Design Supplementary Planning Document* October 2016 (SPD) deals with householder development and includes specific guidance for front and porch extensions, side extensions and rear extensions. Policy CH3: *Normal Requirements of All New Development* of the Crawley Borough Local Plan 2015 – 2030 (LP), adopted in 2015, expressly states that development proposals should comply with any relevant supplementary planning guidance produced by the Council including residential extensions.
5. The two-storey side extension would be marginally recessed behind the dwelling's front elevation. Although the ridge of the main dwelling would run contiguous with the extension, the addition would appear as an obvious, but well-proportioned and considered adjunct at first-floor level, where the form of the original dwelling would stand proud and legible. Given the position of No 76 at the end of a clearly defined group, with no immediately adjacent neighbour to the side, there would be no prospect of any terracing effect or loss of any important space to the side of the dwelling. In this regard I find no conflict with the SPD.
6. The SPD recognises that porch or front extensions can be a significant alteration to the appearance of a house. The guidance states that porches should be subservient to the rest of the house; that they should not extend across the whole width of the property; and should not project more than 1.5m from the original front wall. It also requires them to be in-keeping with the character of the area and property.
7. The existing porch would be replaced by the wrap-around front extension which would project 2m forward of the dwelling's front elevation, in excess of the Council's guidelines. Although it would not extend across the whole property, its width, at just over 5.7m, would be almost equivalent to that of the original house. Overall, it would be a very prominent feature that would significantly influence and alter the simple character and modest appearance of the original dwelling, going well beyond the minor change which has already occurred. Due to its size and prominence, I find that the single-storey extension to the front and side of the dwelling would stand out as a discordant feature that would be out of keeping with the prevailing character of the area. In this regard it would conflict with the objectives of the SPD. By failing to display the quality of design that is required for it to be able to integrate with, and respond positively to, the area's locally distinctive pattern, it would conflict with LP Policy CH2: *Principles of Good Urban Design* as well as Policy CH3.

Living Conditions at 74 Dower Walk

8. No 74 is attached to the appeal property and shares a common rear building line. No 76 has a modest and lightweight conservatory type extension to the rear and adjoining the common boundary between both properties. No 74 is unaltered to the rear. The proposed rear extension would project 3m beyond the rear wall of this semi-detached pair and would span the full width of the extended dwelling.
9. The SPD recognises that rear extensions can significantly impact upon the amenity of neighbouring dwellings. In order to avoid any harmful impact, the guidance states that a single-storey extension should not encroach into an area measured by drawing a 45° angle from the nearest edge of a neighbour's window or door aperture. Correlated to this is a requirement for keeping rear extensions relatively small. The Council points to a conflict with the 45° angle test in relation to the rear patio doors at No 74. This has not been disputed by the appellant.
10. The relationship between Nos 74 and 76 is straightforward. There are no levels differences or other circumstances that would suggest an extension deeper than the normal guidelines could be constructed without impacting upon the neighbour's living conditions. In my view, due to the depth of the rear extension and its proximity to the boundary and nearest door aperture at No 74, the addition would appear as a dominant and overbearing intrusion in the outlook from the neighbour's adjoining living space. Being to the south of the neighbour's garden, it would also have the potential to create a level of overshadowing that would go beyond what is determined reasonable by the Council's guiding principles. The circumstances that would be created appear to me to be precisely those the SPD seeks to avoid and I find no reason why the guidelines should be set aside in this instance. In this regard I find further conflict with LP Policy CH3.

Living Conditions at 67 Buckswood Drive

11. No 67 is a two-storey, end of terrace dwelling that is to the rear and side of No 76. The rear garden of No 67 extends approximately to the front of No 76 and vice versa. The flank walls of both properties were originally set reasonable distances away from the common side boundary between both plots. However, No 67 has been extended to the side and rear at two-storey, such that its flank wall now sits closer to the common boundary, and the deepest part of the dwelling now projects nearer to the rear elevation of the appeal property than originally.
12. The sideways extension of No 76 would undeniably bring these two buildings closer still. Nevertheless, they would not have directly opposing elevations. I am therefore not persuaded that the SPD's requirement for 21m rear to rear window distance, or 10.5m distance between a blank gable and the rear of an adjacent dwelling, would be breached.
13. The impact of the proposed extension upon the outlook and garden to No 67 would, in many ways, reciprocate the relationship imposed upon the living conditions at No 76 by the extension at No 67. Although the dwelling at No 67 is close, the relationship appeared to me as acceptable. The adjoining building struck me as neither overtly dominant nor intrusive in the outlook from the

appeal property, its impact mitigated to some degree by the gap which exists between the flank wall of the extended dwelling and the mutual side boundary. A similar sized gap would be retained between the side addition to No 76 and the same boundary. For these reasons I am satisfied that, on balance, the proposal would not impact upon the living conditions at No 67 in terms of dominance, overbearing, or visual intrusion.

14. The side extension would contain a first-floor rear facing window. This would serve an en-suite area to an additional bedroom. As such it would be likely to be obscurely glazed. Had I been minded to allow the appeal, this could have been secured by condition. I am satisfied that this would have avoided any potential harm from overlooking, including any harm from the perception of being overlooked.

Conclusions

15. Notwithstanding my findings as they relate to the impact upon the living conditions at 67 Buckswood Drive, I find that the proposal would be harmful to the character and appearance of the area, and to the living conditions at 74 Dower Walk. I recognise that there were no objections to the proposal from any neighbouring occupiers, but this does not outweigh the harm that I have identified and the conflict with the development plan. These lead me to conclude that there would also be conflict with the National Planning Policy Framework's objectives for achieving well-designed spaces. Accordingly, and having regard to all other matters raised, the appeal is dismissed.

John D Allan

INSPECTOR