



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 8 July 2021

by **Peter D Biggers** BSc Hons MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 30 July 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/B5480/D/21/3273105 7 Walmer Close, Romford RM7 8QH.

- 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 Elena Spinu against the decision of the London Borough of Havering Council
 - The application Ref P1649.20, dated 29 October 2020, was refused by notice dated 10 February 2021.
 - The development proposed is porch extension and front canopy.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matter

2. In the period since the appeal was submitted the Government has published the revised *National Planning Policy Framework* (the Framework) July 2021 which is being brought into immediate effect for the purposes of decision-making. I have considered the appeal in the light of the revised Framework but am satisfied that none of the amendments to the Framework raise issues relevant to the appeal and importantly none has brought me to any different conclusion on the appeal

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the host property and surrounding area.

Reasons

4. Walmer Close, where the appeal site is located, is a cul-de-sac of mainly semi-detached, two storey houses built in brick and render under tiled roofs. Due to the layout of the road there is no formal building line along most of the close with property frontages laid out to follow the curving alignment of the close. No 7 has had a front porch and canopy constructed the full width of the property and the amended plans to reduce the width slightly, adjacent to the boundary with No 5, have not yet been implemented.
 5. For the most part, as is apparent from a walk along the Close, the semi-detached pairs of houses have been built to the same original design. However, over time the properties have been adapted and altered and some newer houses constructed on the south side of the close, opposite the appeal site. One of the main alterations to the original semi-detached design, which appears to have provided
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only a simple canopy over the front door, has been for owners to have constructed front porches.

6. These are built in a variety of styles. Some provide, simply, lobby space whilst others would appear to accommodate small cloakrooms and there is a variety of approaches to roof design including gabled, hipped, lean to and flat roofed examples. It has been put to me that because of this variety in porch design that what is proposed at No 7 would not be intrusive or unacceptable.
7. I accept there is variety in the design approach to porches but, notwithstanding this, there is still a rhythm to the design and layout of the street where for the most part the overall form and character of the semi-detached pairings remain. What is apparent is that in the whole close of over 50 houses there appeared to be only two examples where the properties have a front porch extension incorporating a canopy and running the full width of the property namely Nos 29 and 49. The circumstances of these two cases are not before me and, given that full width front extensions are not a characteristic of Walmer Close, I am not persuaded that these cases justify the appeal proposal at No 7 and I will consider it on its own merits.
8. It has been put to me that because of the varied building line, with property frontages simply following the road line, the front extension at No 7 would not extend in front of No 9's frontage and to that extent would not be intrusive in the streetscape. I accept that the front extension would not project forward of No 9 and for that matter No 5's porch but, nevertheless, the width and form of the front extension would appear dominant and out of character in views in both directions along the close detracting from the rhythm referred to above.
9. The intention to reduce the width of what has been built pulling it back slightly from the boundary with its semi-detached neighbour is noted but, as the difference would be very small, I am not satisfied that the alteration would make any material difference.
10. The result of the extension, even as amended, would unbalance the character and appearance of the semi-detached pair of properties. Whilst I accept there are some elements that already introduce variation in the frontage – the slightly different window design and the solar panels to No 5 – the main unbalancing feature in the appearance of the semi-detached pair would be the porch and canopy to No 7 now constructed and changes in the colour of materials.
11. It has been put to me that the design is appropriate, carried out to a high quality and finished in appropriate materials. Whilst I acknowledge that the extension has been well executed, for the reasons above, I am not persuaded that the design would be appropriate because of the overall scale and its impact on the frontage.
12. I have been referred to the *Havering Residential Extensions and Alterations Supplementary Planning Document* (SPD) where, although the advice is that front extensions will not normally be acceptable, it acknowledges that such extensions may be possible where the property is set back and there is no clear building line. In these circumstances, which I acknowledge would apply in this case, a front extension with a maximum depth of 1 metre is advised. In the appeal proposal the depth would be about 1.8 metres. However, I am satisfied that in this case the depth of the porch element itself would not be particularly obtrusive because of the set back and the fact that the existing porch on the semi-detached neighbour at No 5 is of a comparable depth. Rather it is the width of the extended canopy portion across the frontage obscuring the ground floor front window coupled with

the fact that the roofing material does not match the existing roof that would intrude in the street scene and fail to meet the guidance in the SPD.

13. The Framework at paragraph 130 (previously para. 127) requires that developments must be visually attractive and sympathetic to local character to create high quality buildings and spaces amongst other things and in these respects the proposal fails. Policy DC61 of the *Havering Local Development Framework Core Strategy* (HCS) dealing with urban design reflects the Framework in requiring development to maintain, enhance or improve the character and appearance of its location.
14. As already stated, to assist in the implementation of its policies in householder developments the Council has produced the SPD which has not been followed in this case and, whilst it is only guidance, it is underpinned by the policies of the HCS and is a material consideration.
15. For the reasons above, the design objectives of policy DC61 and the SPD would not be achieved by this proposal and it would be unacceptable in terms of the impacts on the character and appearance of the semi-detached pair at Nos 5 and 7 and of the surroundings on Walmer Close.

Other Matters

16. I understand the appellant's wish to make sustainable and effective use of housing land, an objective which is encouraged by the Framework in Section 11 and the *London Plan 2021* (LP) in Policy D3. I acknowledge that this policy objective makes the principle of extensions to properties acceptable. However, paragraph 124 (previously para. 122) in the same section of the Framework and LP Policy D3 both state that this should not be at the expense of an area's character and setting. Thus, whilst I understand the objective, I am not persuaded that the additional floor space provided could not have been achieved in a different way without harm to the character and appearance of the property and its surroundings. Sustainable and effective use of the dwelling would not therefore outweigh the harm to the character and appearance of the host dwelling and its surroundings as a result of the proposal.
17. The appellant's proposal to reduce the scale of the front extension is noted but the reduction is insufficient to overcome the above concerns.

Conclusion

18. I have considered the matters before me but for the reasons given above, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

P. D. Biggers

INSPECTOR