

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 27 August 2021

by Andrew Dale BA (Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 15 September 2021

Appeal Ref. APP/J1535/D/21/3277428
36 Mount Pleasant Road, Chigwell IG7 5ER

- 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 Brett Wexler against the decision of Epping Forest District Council.
 - The application ref. PL/EPF/0344/21, dated 9 February 2021, was refused by notice dated 6 April 2021.
 - The development proposed is described on the application form as "*First Floor Front Extension*".
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural matter

2. In July 2021, after the submission of this appeal, a new version of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) was published, replacing the 2019 edition. I have had regard to this document, but it is evident that the substance of the Framework, as it relates to the sole main issue in this case, has not changed. In such circumstances, I am satisfied that there is no requirement to seek the views of the parties on the revised Framework, and that in taking such an approach no prejudice to any party would arise.

Main issue

3. The main issue is the impact of the proposed development upon the character and appearance of the dwelling and its surroundings.

Reasons

4. The appeal property is one of 7 houses situated on the southern side of this short leg of Mount Pleasant Road which runs between 2 sharp bends in the carriageway. The surrounding area is residential in character.
 5. The pair of 2-storey semi-detached houses at nos 36 and 38, rather like the similar pair at nos 32 and 34, possess a very distinctive architectural style and built form. At the front, each of them has a small 2-storey wing covered by a hipped roof and set to one side, with a prominent front-facing feature bay window at first floor level, alongside which is a balcony. The vast proportion of the living accommodation is contained under 2-storey flat roofs located largely
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behind the hipped roof wings. The flat roofs join onto the side of the hipped wings but some way back from their front walls. Paired garages under single-storey flat roofs occupy the centre of the host semi-detached block. With only minor differences between their window styles, front entrance doors and coloured finish to the walls, the symmetrical form and original character of nos 36 and 38 remain substantially intact. Together they make a very positive contribution to the street scene.

6. The principle of extending the property is not at issue and I accept that householder extension schemes will inevitably make more efficient use of a site, thus moving towards optimising its potential. However, the Framework also advises that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development; so development should add to the overall quality of the area and be visually attractive as a result of good architecture and sympathetic to local character. I consider that the appeal proposal is ill-judged in these important respects.
7. The proposed flat-roofed, first floor front extension would be limited in size, utilise matching fenestration detailing and external materials and be lower than the core 2-storey flat roof and the ridge over the 2-storey hipped roof. Even so, it is apparent that building up over the open balcony in the manner proposed would introduce a new section of flat roof reaching in front of and above the eaves at the corner of the hipped roof. This would unfortunately obscure one of the sides of the feature bay window as well as a front corner of the distinctive hipped roof and there would be a direct and awkward clash of roof forms across the forwardmost front elevation of the appeal property.
8. The development proposal would therefore seriously detract from the front elevation of the host dwelling which can be clearly seen from various public vantage points along this short leg of Mount Pleasant Road. Moreover, it would not relate positively to its wider context. The Council is correct to point out that the extension would have a ruinous effect on the broad symmetry displayed by the pair of houses at nos 36 and 38 to the detriment of this local street scene.
9. I saw that some of the properties on this same leg of Mount Pleasant Road have been extended and altered. The appellant has also drawn my attention to 4 properties on the other legs of Mount Pleasant Road (at nos 22, 24, 27 and 62) where planning permissions have been granted for extensions and alterations. I have looked at the approved plans and at the properties themselves along the various legs of this road on my site visit but I could not detect any extension project (as built or as on plan) identical to or even similar to what is proposed under this appeal scheme. There are no binding local precedents for the appeal proposal in the available evidence put before me.
10. Viewed as a whole, I consider that the proposed extension would not represent a visually attractive solution that would add to the overall quality of the area. The development would not be sufficiently respectful of or complementary to the existing building's character, period and form, the local character and street scene and the setting of the site. I therefore find on the main issue that the proposed development would harm the character and appearance of the dwelling and its surroundings.
11. As the development would not be an example of high-quality design and would neither safeguard and enhance the qualities of this built environment nor

involve the acceptable extension and alteration of a residential building, there would be conflict with the aims of Policies CP2 and DBE10 of the adopted Epping Forest District Local Plan (LP) and Policies DM 9 and DM 10 of the emerging Epping Forest District Local Plan Submission Version December 2017.

12. There would not be compliance with the key design themes in the Framework insofar as they relate to achieving well-designed places.
13. I ought to add that I have found no conflict with Policy DBE9 of the adopted LP (listed in the reason for refusal on the decision notice) as the Council, correctly in my view, did not identify an excessive loss of amenity for neighbouring properties for any reason. The lack of harm in that regard does not outweigh the harm I have found under the main issue.
14. My finding on the main issue is decisive to the outcome of this appeal. There is conflict with the development plan. The harm cannot be mitigated by the imposition of planning conditions and it is not outweighed by other material considerations. For the reasons given above and taking into account all other matters raised, including the absence of objections from local residents and Chigwell Parish Council, I conclude that this appeal should not succeed.

Andrew Dale

INSPECTOR