
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 15 December 2021

by Andre Pinto BA MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 6th January 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/E5330/D/21/3279158

27 Silver Birch Close, Thamesmead, London SE28 8RW

- 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 Mrs Ingrid Uche against the decision of Royal Borough of Greenwich Council.
 - The application Ref 21/0771/HD, dated 1 March 2021, was refused by notice dated 27 April 2021.
 - The development proposed is conversion of garage to a habitable room and construction to enlarge an existing hard standing and drop kerb for an additional car.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. I have adopted the description of the development included in the Council's Decision Notice as agreed between the Appellant and the Council.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effects of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

4. The appeal site is located within a fairly quiet and secluded cul-de-sac, off Birchdene Drive, characterised by a predominance of semi-detached properties, organised in symmetrical pairs, along the close.
5. Although there is some variation within the surrounding area in relation to design, architectural features and general appearance, the dwellings adjacent to the appeal site, particularly Nos 25 to 28 Silver Birch Close, share similar details, which give the close a consistent, harmonious feel. These features are also in its vast majority evident on the majority of the dwellings located along the same side of the street as the appeal site. This existing architectural coherence greatly contributes to define the character and appearance of the area.
6. The present proposal is for the conversion of the existing garage to a habitable room and to extend the dropped kerb and existing hard surface drive to allow for additional off-street parking.

7. As set out in drawing LB-PA-A-DR-0100, the construction of the proposed window would require a new wall to be erected, in the place of the existing garage door, high enough to support a window at the same level as the other window located on the ground floor. The proposal would also result in a reduction of the existing garden area and lead to an increase in the amount of hardstanding located to the front of the house, which would be particularly noticeable as it would be used as off-street parking.
8. Due to its location to the front of the house, the proposed development would be clearly from street level and from public land, therefore having a significant impact on the appearance of the whole Close.
9. The proposal would disturb the existing relationship with 28 Silver Birch Close, the building the appeal site is paired with, as it would not replicate its external appearance and design. This would affect the visual impact and architectural significance of the whole group of houses along the Close, particularly Nos 25 to 28 Silver Birch Close. Consequently, the proposal would be harmful to the character and appearance of the host building and the surrounding area.
10. The Appellant, in its Statement of Case, states that the proposal would have minimal impact on the character and appearance of the host dwelling but would provide significant benefits in relation to living conditions and the efficient use of space.
11. Although I accept the point made in relation to living conditions and the efficient use of space, the Government attaches great importance to the design of the built environment. In particular, paragraph 130 of the National Planning Policy Framework (The Framework) states that planning decisions should ensure that all developments will function well and add to the overall quality of the area. In this case, for the reasons set out above, I find that the development would not add to the overall quality of the area and, consequently, in that regard, fail to be in accordance with the objectives set in The Framework.
12. Therefore the proposed development would harm the character and appearance of the area and be contrary to Policy DH3 of The London Plan (2021) Policies DH(a) and DH1 of the Royal Greenwich Local Plan: Core Strategy with detailed Policies (2014) and the Residential Extensions, Basements and Conversions Guidance SPD (2018) which seek to ensure high quality design and The Framework.

Other Matters

13. The Appellant has also drawn my attention to other properties, in the vicinity of the appeal site, where the design approach is not as consistent as for 25 to 28 Silver Birch Close.
14. I am not aware of the details or particular circumstances of these other cases, but I do note that, although Photograph 4 in the Appeal Statement of Case Appendices (undated) does show two units, in the vicinity of the site, that do not include a garage to the front of the house, the pair, in itself, is consistent in its external appearance.
15. In any event, I must determine the proposal before me on its own merits and for the reasons stated I consider the proposed development would be harmful.

Conclusion

16. For the reasons given above, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Andre Pinto

INSPECTOR