



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 13 January 2022

by J Reid BA(Hons) BArch(Hons) RIBA

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 14 January 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/Q3820/D/21/3283048

173 Weald Drive, Crawley RH10 6NZ

- 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 Julian East against the decision of Crawley Borough Council.
 - The application Ref CR/2021/0457/FUL, dated 16 June 2021, was refused by notice dated 27 August 2021.
 - The development proposed is single storey front extension.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are the effect that the proposed development would have on:
 - the character and appearance of the surrounding area, and
 - the living conditions of the occupiers of 175 Weald Drive, regarding daylight and sunlight and outlook.

Reasons

Character and appearance

3. The appeal site is within the Furnace Green neighbourhood, where the consistent design of the New Town housing contributes positively to the sense of place. The appeal dwelling is at the roughly north end of a row of similar style semidetached New Town dwellings on the east side of the gently curving Weald Drive. They are set back from the road in front gardens with drives, and most include a modest flat roofed porch and attached garage at the side that project in front of the dwellings. The garages at the appeal dwelling and its attached neighbour at 175 Weald Drive project a little further forward than those of most other nearby pairs, and some dwellings have been altered and extended. However, the simple plain fronts at most of the dwellings have largely endured, and they are important to the sense of place.
4. Due to its scale, form, and siting, the proposed extension would overlap much of the ground floor front of the appeal dwelling. So, whilst it would align with the porch, its bulk would unacceptably detract from the form and character of the existing dwelling. Moreover, due to its scale and siting at the front, the proposal would be unacceptably obtrusive in nearby views from Weald Drive, and it would harmfully erode the important spaciousness in the front garden. As the shrubs in the front garden could be removed at any time, these and the nearby street tree could not be relied upon to partly screen the proposal.

5. Whilst 175 includes a side extension with a catslide and dormer over the garage and 193 towards the south end of the row has been much extended, the Council says that they predate the Crawley Borough Council Urban Design Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). As the SPD aims to respond to and reinforce local distinctiveness, these developments provide little support for this damaging scheme. Also, as most nearby dwellings on the same side of the road, including 177 and 179, have largely unaltered fronts, the proposal would look incongruous, to the detriment of the generally consistent street scene on the east side of Weald Drive. As the extended detached dwelling at 150 is on the opposite side of the road, it attracts little weight.
6. Moreover, due to the siting of its windows and their close relationship to the dwelling at 175, the proposal would allow views into the neighbouring front garden and towards the neighbouring lounge windows if the vegetation by the common boundary were to fail or be removed. Whilst the occupiers of 175 would reasonably expect to enjoy greater levels of privacy in the rooms at the back of their home than at the front, the increased perception of overlooking that the proposal could cause would be harmfully at odds with local character.
7. Therefore, I consider that the proposal would harm the character and appearance of the surrounding area. It would be contrary to Policy CH2 of the Crawley Borough Local Plan 2015-2030 (LP) which aims to retain successful places, LP Policy CH3 which seeks good design and respect for context, relevant guidance in the SPD, and the National Planning Policy Framework (Framework) which aims to achieve well-designed places.

Living conditions

8. Due to its scale and siting, the proposal would only be seen in oblique views from the nearby windows at 175. So, whilst the proposal could increase the perception of being overlooked for the reasons given in my first main issue, it would not cause a material loss of privacy for the neighbouring occupiers in their lounge or front garden. Also, due to its scale, orientation, and siting in relation to the lounge windows at 175, the proposal would not cause an unacceptable loss of daylight or sunlight. Moreover, although it would be closer to the lounge windows at 175, the extension would be no taller or deeper than the existing porch, so it would not be so overbearing or so oppressive that it would harm the neighbouring occupiers' outlook. Thus, I consider that the proposal would not harm the living conditions of the occupiers of 175 Weald Drive, regarding daylight and sunlight and outlook. It would satisfy LP Policy CH3 which seeks a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings, the Framework, and guidance in the SPD.

Conclusion

9. Whilst the proposal would not harm the living conditions of the occupiers of 175, the harm that it would cause to the character and appearance of the surrounding area is a compelling objection to the scheme. I have found that the proposed development would be contrary to the Development Plan when taken as a whole. The other considerations in this case, including the Framework, do not outweigh that conflict. For the reasons given, the appeal should be dismissed.

J Reid

INSPECTOR