

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 10 December 2021

by R C Shrimplin MA(Cantab) DipArch RIBA FRTPI FCI Arb MCIL

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 21ST January 2022

Appeal Reference: APP/D5120/D/21/3281771

Land at 5 Masefield Close, Erith DA8 2DG

- 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 V Pavel against the decision of the London Borough of Bexley Council.
 - The application (reference 21/00914/FUL, dated 1 May 2021) was refused by notice dated 4 August 2021.
 - The development proposed is described in the application form as a "single storey (side and front) extension with flat warm roof".
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary points

2. Notwithstanding the description of the application that was given in the application form, the nature of the proposal can more clearly be expressed as set out in the Council's decision notice as the construction of a "single storey front, side and rear extension and pitched roof to front".

Main issues

3. There are two main issues in this appeal. The first is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the host building and its surroundings. The second is the effect of the proposed development on the residential amenities of neighbours (whether unacceptable harm would be caused by overbearing appearance).

Reasons

4. The appeal site lies in an area of suburban residential development, which is characterised by conventional housing types in semi-detached pairs and short terraces. Masefield Close is a short cul-de-sac, off Bridge Road, and number 5 Masefield Close is located at the end of the Close, where a T-shaped turning head has been formed.
5. The existing house at number 5 is one of a pair of semi-detached houses (with number 6) in a traditional form. The houses are constructed of brickwork, under a pitched, half-hipped roof. Each has a ground floor bay window on the

front, with a flat roof extending across the elevation. The house itself is set in from the side (north-west) boundary of the appeal site, although there are some modest structures alongside the house, with a larger outbuilding at the end of the garden.

6. It is now proposed that a single storey extension should be constructed between the house and the side boundary (extending also to the front and rear), while the flat roof canopy on the front elevation would be replaced by a pitched roof.
7. The 'National Planning Policy Framework' (which was revised in July 2021) emphasises the aim of "achieving well designed places" in the broadest sense (notably at Section 12), while making effective use of land and encouraging economic activity. It is aimed at achieving good design standards generally, which includes protecting existing residential amenities and providing good standards of accommodation.
8. Policies ENV39 and H9 in the 'Bexley Council Unitary Development Plan' (adopted in April 2004) lay a specific emphasis on the need for good design, including in respect of "residential development consisting of extensions and alterations". The 'London Borough of Bexley Core Strategy' (which was adopted in February 2012) and 'The London Plan' likewise seek to encourage high standards of design.
9. Section 2 of the 'Design and Development Control Guidelines' underpins the Development Plan Policies, with specific guidance on "extensions to houses".
10. The proposed side extension would project forward of the main front elevation on the existing building but, in itself, it would have only a limited visual impact of the character of the host building and hence on the streetscene. Indeed, it should align with an outbuilding on the adjoining plot (not shown on the application drawings). The fenestration pattern proposed is clumsy, however, and the front elevation would need to be carefully detailed.
11. Nevertheless, the proposed pitched roof feature on the front elevation would be very unsatisfactory. The drawings submitted with the application are lacking in clarity but I have concluded that the design would be poorly related to the front of the neighbouring building at number 6 and would link very awkwardly with the new side extension and its parapet. Thus, the pitched roof element would have a markedly harmful effect on the appearance of the host building and it would detract from the quality of the surroundings.
12. Turning to the impact of the scheme on the neighbouring property, I am conscious that the proposed side extension would infill an area between the house and its side boundary, alongside some existing structures at number 4 Masfield Close. It would, however, appear to be relatively higher than necessary, with tall upstand parapet walls, and, on balance, I have formed the opinion that it would create an over-intrusive element on the boundary.
13. The new extension would not unduly overshadow its neighbour but, from my reading of the drawings, I have concluded that the scheme would have an undue and unnecessary visual impact on the neighbouring property.

14. In short, I have concluded that the proposals as a whole would have a harmful visual effect on the character and appearance of the host building and its surroundings and that it would harm the residential amenities of neighbours, also because of its visual impact.
15. Evidently, the appeal site lies within an established urban area, which is “sustainable” in planning terms, and the proposed development would make a useful addition to the existing house. Nevertheless, I am convinced that the harm that I have identified outweighs the benefits of the project. Hence, I have concluded that the scheme before me would conflict with both national and local planning policies (including the Development Plan) and that it ought not to be allowed. Although I have considered all the matters that have been raised in the representations, I have found nothing to cause me to alter my decision.
16. In reaching these conclusions I have considered whether the appeal could be allowed but subject to conditions to address the design issues that I have identified. I have formed the opinion, however, that any such condition or set of conditions would be so complex and onerous as to be unreasonable and that therefore this appeal must be dismissed.

Roger C Shrimplin

INSPECTOR