



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 20 April 2022

by Stewart Glassar BSc (Hons) MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 10 May 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/Q3820/W/21/3285312

142 & 144 Langley Drive, Langley Green, Crawley RH11 7TG

- 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 Imran Akhtar against the decision of Crawley Borough Council.
 - The application Ref CR/2021/0345/FUL, dated 5 May 2021, was refused by notice dated 19 August 2021.
 - The development proposed is described as 'retrospective application for front porches with duo pitched roofs at the front of each dwelling'.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the dwellings and wider street scene.

Reasons

3. The appeal site comprises two dwellings which form part of a terrace of five houses (Nos. 140 – 148 Langley Drive). The houses in the terrace, which are of modest size and design, are all two storeys and finished in red brick with tiled roof. The terrace as a whole is set noticeably closer to the road and public footpath than the Langley Drive properties on either side of it. The two appeal properties together with No.140 Langley Drive sit slightly higher than the remaining two houses in the terrace, to reflect the slight incline in the road. These factors give the appeal dwellings a greater degree of prominence than most other properties in the vicinity.
4. Some houses in the area have been altered and extended but such works have remained subservient so that for the most part their modest fronts have largely endured. Thus, even though there is new housing opposite the appeal site, the appearance of most of the housing and its positioning, together with the width of the road and generous roadside verges all contribute to the area's prevailing pleasant spacious character and sense of place.
5. Policies CH2 and CH3 of the Crawley Borough Local Plan 2015 – 2030 (LP) require, amongst other things, that development proposals respond to and reinforce locally distinctive patterns of development and relate sympathetically to their surroundings in matters including scale and massing. Policy CH3 also requires compliance with supplementary planning guidance produced by the Council.

6. The 'Urban Design' Supplementary Planning Document, 2016 (SPD), advises that front extensions and porches should be subservient to the rest of the house, not project more than 1.5m from the original front wall of the main dwelling; and be in keeping with the character of the area and property.
7. In conflict with this guidance, the porches the subject of this appeal appear overly large relative to the width of each house, meaning that they dominate the front elevations of the dwellings rather than appear as subservient features. Their design, detailing and use of lighter coloured bricks add to the incongruity of the proposal when compared to the simple composition of the dwellings both within this terrace and also within the wider surrounding area.
8. Furthermore, the set forward position of the terrace relative to the houses either side and its proximity to the junction with Honeysuckle Lane reinforces the prominence of the porches within the street scene. This further highlights their incompatibility with the prevailing character of built form in the area and in particular with other porches or front canopies which, for the most part, are of modest appearance and have a flat or curved roof design.
9. The existing porch at No.140 Langley Drive (No.140) is very similar to those erected on the appeal properties. It is said that this forms part of the wider context and character with which the appeal scheme conforms. However, I understand that this neighbouring porch is immune from enforcement action but is not something which had the benefit of planning permission.
10. However, as I have noted, extensions and porches on houses in the vicinity of the appeal site are generally subservient elements and appear to assimilate acceptably in terms of their design and do not, based on what I have seen, harm the character and appearance of the street scene. In contrast, the porch at No.140 displays all of the shortcomings I have identified in relation to the appeal proposal. Therefore, the fact that this other porch exists does not in itself provide a planning reason to justify it being replicated on the neighbouring houses.
11. Accordingly, in my view, the proposal does not add balance and symmetry, does not represent the positive enhancement of the houses, nor appears well-integrated with the rest of the terrace. The proposal is out of keeping with the character and appearance of the dwellings and the wider street scene.
12. The proposal is therefore contrary to Policies CH2 and CH3 of the LP and the guidance in the SPD which, amongst other things, seek to ensure developments are of high quality in terms of their design and that they relate sympathetically to their surroundings. It is also contrary to Paragraph 130 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2021 (the 'Framework'), which amongst other things, seeks to ensure developments are sympathetic to local character.

Other Matters

13. I appreciate that the porch and the internal space it provides is designed to improve the accommodation and wellbeing of occupiers. The proposal is also said by the appellant to represent an efficient use of the land. However, the weight I could attach to these benefits is minimal and would in any event be insufficient against the harm and conflict with the development plan that I have found and to which I ascribe substantial weight.

14. The appellant considers that the proposal is preferable to having smaller structures at the front of the buildings, which it is suggested would look out of place. However, there are no details of an alternative scheme and in any event, I must determine the proposal which is before me.
15. The absence of objection from neighbours to the development does not mean that the current scheme is acceptable. In any event, it does not absolve me from making an assessment as to its effects on the street scene.
16. The proposal would not cause harm to the living conditions of neighbours and that no highways issues were raised. I have no substantive evidence before me to come to different conclusions. Similarly, there are no trees or landscape features affected by the proposal and the houses are well located in relation to local facilities and services. However, these factors represent a lack of harm and as such, are neutral considerations in any balance.
17. Whilst I accept that the proposal would be sustainable insofar as it would accord with the economic and social objectives of the Framework, it would conflict with the environmental objective as a result of its effect on the built environment.
18. In view of my findings, it is not necessary for me to take any action in relation to Natural England's position statement regarding development within the Sussex North Water Resource Zone.

Conclusion

19. The proposal would harm the character and appearance of the dwellings and wider street scene and would conflict with the development plan taken as a whole. There are no material considerations that indicate the decision should be made other than in accordance with the development plan. Therefore, for the reasons given, I conclude that the appeal should not succeed.

Stewart Glassar

INSPECTOR