
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 28 June 2022

by Stewart Glassar BSc (Hons) MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 5 July 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/K2230/D/21/3282976

Gable End, Watling Street, Rochester, Kent ME2 3UQ

- 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 & Mrs Marc & Vicki Sandall against the decision of Gravesham Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 20210584, dated 6 May 2021, was refused by notice dated 24 June 2021.
 - The development proposed is a two storey side, single storey rear extension and loft conversion with rear dormers.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for a two storey side, single storey rear extension and loft conversion with rear dormers at Gable End, Watling Street, Rochester, Kent ME2 3UQ in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref 20210584, dated 6 May 2021, subject to the conditions set out in the schedule below.

Preliminary Matters

2. A revised National Planning Policy Framework was published by the Government between the determination of the planning application and the appeal coming before me. I am satisfied that this latest version of the Framework does not raise any new considerations in relation to this appeal.
3. From my site visit I was able to confirm that the development has been largely completed. I have determined this appeal accordingly although I have not referred to the retrospective nature of the proposal in the heading to this appeal as it is not a form of development.

Main Issue

4. The main issue is the effect of the development on the character and appearance of the site and surrounding area.

Reasons

5. Gable End is a semi-detached, two storey dwelling with accommodation in its roof. It forms one of a dozen or so dwellings which front the northern side of this part of Watling Street. The dwellings are generally set well back from the road and have generous plot sizes. Many of the properties appear to span almost the entire width of their plots and although most are set below the level of Watling Street, they are nonetheless largely visible from the highway. However, there is sufficient variety in the type, style, size, height and use of

finished materials amongst these houses for there to be no particular homogeneity or consistency in their overall appearance.

6. The appeal property displays a rendered finish with dark roof tiles. Such finished materials are not uncommon amongst the other nearby houses. The front elevation has a protruding upper front gable and a side dormer which projects from the main ridge of the property, which has been extended to accommodate the two storey side extension. Front gables and roof dormers feature on a number of the neighbouring houses, albeit none of the dormers project from the ridge line.
7. What principally distinguishes the appeal property and its adjoining neighbour from the other properties in this group, is that they are semi-detached. Therefore, they have a particular physical and visual relationship with one another that the other houses do not have. The adjoining property has a brick and hanging tile finish, the front elevation features some timber framing and render with the main roof tiles being red/brown. It therefore contrasts with the simpler, more contemporary finish of the appeal property, which omits such feature detailing as well as the previously approved chimneys. Accordingly, apart from sharing the same ridge height, there is little the two have in common in terms of their appearance, size or profile.
8. Such a close juxtaposition of two contrasting styles can often result in an incongruous appearance such that the development fails to integrate within the wider area. In this particular instance, the variety of styles, appearance and finishes of houses in the immediate vicinity together with their set back position and proximity to one another, means that the effect of the development on the wider area is dissipated.
9. Whilst the differences between the two houses will be noticeable, variety and difference does not necessarily lead to harm. I do not find that the proposal would result in the appeal property having a dominating effect on its semi-detached pair or the local street scene such that it would undermine the character and appearance of the site or neighbouring property. In view of my findings the appellant's suggestion of adding mock beams to the front elevation is not necessary.
10. As I have found that the proposal would not cause harm to character and appearance, it would comply with Policy CS19 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (2014) which, amongst other things, seeks to ensure that developments respect the character of the area. The proposal would also accord with Paragraph 130 of the National Planning Policy Framework, which amongst other things, seeks to ensure developments are sympathetic to local character.

Other Matters

11. Given the closeness of properties to one another, there is an existing degree of mutual overlooking. The two rear dormers undoubtedly provide additional views across parts of the neighbours' rear gardens. However, given their position and the existing levels of overlooking which exist, any additional overlooking resulting from the dormers would not be significant.
12. The side dormer, which serves an en-suite bathroom, faces towards Chestnut Lodge, the dormer bungalow to the west. This neighbour has a number of

obscurely glazed dormer windows facing the appeal site albeit at a slightly different height and position to the dormer in the appeal building. Provided the en-suite dormer window is obscurely glazed and non-opening where less than 1.7m above floor level, then I see no reason why it would lead to a harmful loss of privacy. The same would apply to the landing window below it.

13. The two storey side and single storey rear extensions are sizable additions. However, they are set off the boundary to the west and whilst visible to neighbours, given their orientation and the position of neighbouring windows, neither would result in a loss of light or create a sense of enclosure which would be harmful to the living conditions of neighbouring occupiers.

Conditions

14. The standard time limit condition is not necessary as the development has already been implemented. However, a condition is required in the interests of certainty that lists the approved plans. As I have indicated, the side dormer window and first floor landing windows should be obscurely glazed and non-opening below 1.7m. Given the size of the rear extension and the extent of its flat roof, a condition ensuring that it is not used as a balcony or similar is necessary to protect the living conditions of neighbouring occupiers.

Conclusion

15. For the reasons given above, having considered the development plan as a whole, along with all other relevant material considerations, I conclude that the appeal should be allowed subject to the conditions below.

Stewart Glassar

INSPECTOR

Schedule of Conditions:

- 1) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the approved plans listed below:

Existing plans and elevations	- HHL/629-1 rev A
Proposed plan and elevations	- HHL/629-3 rev F
Proposed plans	- HHL/629-2 rev F
Sections	- HHL/629-4 rev D
Sections and details	- HHL/629-5 rev D
Standard notes	- HHL/629-10 rev B
- 2) Notwithstanding condition 1, within 6 months of the date of this decision, the first floor western flank window to serve the landing and the second floor western flank windows to serve the en-suite shall be fitted with obscured glazing, and no part of those windows that is less than 1.7 metres above the floor of the room in which it is installed shall be capable of being opened. Details of the type of obscured glazing shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority and once installed the approved obscured glazing shall be retained thereafter.
- 3) The roof area of the single storey rear extension hereby permitted shall not be used as a balcony, roof garden or similar amenity area.

END