



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 7 September 2022

by J Somers BSocSci (Planning) MA (HEC) MRTPI IHBC

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 25 October 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/M1595/D/22/3299788

7 Churchill Road, Grays, RM17 6TW

- 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 Rasa Racinskiene against the decision of Thurrock Council.
 - The application Ref 21/02184/HHA, dated 27 December 2021, was refused by notice dated 18 March 2022.
 - The development proposed is described as a two storey side extension and single storey and part two storey rear extension with roof lights.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matter

2. I have taken the description of the proposed development from the Council's Decision Notice as this describes the different elements requiring consent. I note that this description is also stated on the appellant's Appeal Form.
3. On my site visit, the appeal building was undergoing a large two storey construction which was attached to the southern side wall of the dwelling, which is labelled on the Block Plan as proposed No.'7a' and which appeared to be another dwelling. Whilst I have not any details within the appeal documents regarding this construction, I have also taken into account the current appearance of the scheme in this letter which is different from the proposed plans as presented in the appeal.

Main Issue

4. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development upon the existing building and the character and appearance of the locality.

Reasons

5. The appeal site is located on the corner of Churchill Road and Medlar Road. The local area forms a number of streets that contains formally laid out speculative housing which appears to date from the late twentieth century. The local area contains detached and semi-detached dwellings which have a symmetry in their placement with a consistent building line and setback with open front gardens with some dwellings having small boundary walls or open vegetated front gardens with no boundary walls. There are also visual gaps in and around dwellings and to the first floor level in between properties over garages where glimpses to the tops of trees in rear gardens are experienced and is a positive characteristic of the area alongside trees to front gardens. On my site visit I noticed very similar designs, particular those along Churchill

Road are two storey, brown/red brick with hipped roof forms and timber boarding applied to first floor level. The cul-de-sacs from Churchill Road had less status in the design with more functional pitched and gable rooves with a cream brick, however maintained the visual gaps and spacious quality in and around dwellings.

6. The appeal site appears to have been one of the characteristic detached dwellings which has now formed a semi-detached dwelling; and given its position on a corner plot, has more facades of the dwelling exposed to the public realm. The building comprises of a main two storey component with hipped roof and timber boarding to the first floor and maintains setbacks to Churchill and Medlar Roads which assists in reinforcing the spacious qualities of the locality. These positive elements reinforce the local character, appearance and distinctiveness of the area. The two storey construction to the south does however elongate the building given it a visually bulkier appearance in the street scene.
7. In undertaking extensions and alterations to existing buildings, the Thurrock Core Strategy and Policies for Management of Development (CSPMD) Policy PMD2 and Policy CSTP22 are design led policies which have a number of design criteria to adhere to such as being high quality, renewable and low emission technology, respond positively to the character of the area, promote continuity, amongst others. CSPMD Policy CSTP23 is directly related to the Thurrock and seeks to protect, manage and enhance the character of Thurrock to ensure improved quality and a strengthened sense of place. The Thurrock Design Guide Residential Alterations and Extensions Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) supports the design policies of the CSPMD and provides further guidance on residential extensions, their design and placement.
8. The proposal would extend to the side and rear and would substantially increase and subsume the existing dwelling where the proposal would incorporate an elongated flat section to the centre of the roof, forming an almost crown-type roof form. Given the two storey construction of 7A, the extension to the north would create a very large and elongated built form. The two storey extensions would mean that there would be the erosion of much of the visual gap to the side and rear, which is a positive characteristic of this particular locality.
9. Whilst a hipped roof form is characteristic in this context, the proposed roof form would be uncharacteristic with its large flat component to the centre of the roof. It would appear that this has been undertaken to lower the overall height of the roof, the result is a large amount of visual bulk and massing which is evident in each of the elevations and when compared to the smaller functional form and design of surrounding dwellings where the apex is the point of the roof rather than an elongated component. The proposed extensions would create a materially larger dwelling and form unlike anything around and could not be seen as being a subservient addition when considering the form as an extension or as in-effect, a completely new dwelling. The proposed extension when experienced with No.7A would have a substantially larger mass and visual bulk in the street scene and create a dwelling and built form that would have an awkward and cramped appearance with loss of spaciousness in and around the dwelling when experienced on what is a relatively small plot of land.

10. I appreciate comments in the appellant's SoC that the building is not in a conservation area or locally listed, however planning policies PMD2 and Policies CSTP22 and CSTP23 together with the SPD seek that development reflects the surrounding context and characteristics of the locality, regardless of any designation. Whilst I can appreciate that design elements such as matching materials, setting in the apex and the two storey component on the front façade have attempted to reduce the visual bulk, this is unconvincing due to the amount of visual bulk, massing and the overall size when seen and experienced on what is a small plot of land.
11. In conclusion of this matter, the proposed extensions when combined would result in the loss of positive characteristics such as the visual gap in and around dwellings would be clearly disproportionate and the additional visual bulk and massing would be unlike other extensions constructed within the immediate vicinity. Consequently, the proposal would be harmful to the character and appearance of the existing building, and the local distinctiveness of the locality on this prominent corner location and be contrary to CSPMD planning policies PMD2 and Policies CSTP22 and CSTP23 together with the SPD as described previously.

Conclusion

12. For the reasons given above, I conclude that the appeal is dismissed.

J Somers
INSPECTOR