
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 22 December 2022

by C Hall BSc MPhil MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 10 January 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/K2230/D/21/3286812

4 Petersfield Drive, Meopham, Gravesend DA13 0TR

- 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 Tom Bailey against the decision of Gravesend Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 20210873, dated 8 July 2021, was refused by notice dated 6 September 2021.
 - The development proposed is a loft conversion with rear dormer, new front gable end and 2 front dormers.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are the effect of the development on:
 - the character and appearance of the existing dwelling and surrounding area; and
 - the living conditions of the occupants of neighbouring houses in respect of privacy.

Reasons

Character and appearance

3. The appeal site relates to a detached bungalow with off-street parking to the front. It is located within a row of other properties that are single storey, although in Whitepost Lane to the east numerous chalet dwellings and dormer windows of varying size and design are evident. The local area is predominantly residential in nature.
 4. The plans show a raised ridge, two dormer windows in the front roof slope and a gable element. The alterations are modest in scale, with the gable matching others in the street scene, for example no.3 opposite. The dormers are stand-alone, have pitched roofs set down from the main ridge line, and are positioned away from the side walls of the property. To my mind, such dormer-window design represents good architectural principles, and I consider that the elements would visually connect with the overall appearance of the host dwelling, without dominating it. I also note that the dwelling would not be the only one with first floor accommodation in Petersfield Drive, with a unit on the corner with Ashleigh Close having extended into the roof.
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5. I am cognisant that the development would result in the formation of front dormer windows that are not present on other bungalows in the row. However, in the absence of any clear and salient planning harms relating to the proposal, the weight to be afforded to the introduction of the new features, in the specific circumstances of this case, is limited.
6. At the rear, I acknowledge that the unbroken dormer window is large. Nonetheless, it would be set down from the ridge line of the main house, and away from the eaves and the side walls. The rear garden is screened by existing vegetation for the most part, and as such the scale of the dormer window would be tempered when seen in glimpses from neighbouring amenity areas. This element of the scheme will also have a limited impact upon the character or appearance of the wider surrounding area given the separation from public viewpoints. Overall, on balance I consider that the effect on the character of the property and locality would not be so demonstrably harmful as to warrant a refusal of the appeal on this ground.
7. I conclude on this issue that the proposal would assimilate with the character and appearance of the existing dwelling and surrounding area. It would be in accordance with Policy CS19 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy 2014, which seeks to secure new development of acceptable scale and appearance. It would also be consistent with the advice in the National Planning Policy Framework, which states that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development.

Living conditions

8. Due to the proximity of the rear dormer element to the side boundary with 6 Petersfield Drive, there is potential for overlooking of the back garden area of this adjacent property where currently none exists (given the space separation to other surrounding dwellings and their rear amenity spaces, I am satisfied that no other property in the locality would be demonstrably harmed by the proposals in respect of privacy).
9. Although the existing hedgerow running along the border between the dwellings may provide some screening, views over the private amenity space of no.6 would still be afforded, including the more intimate areas close to its rear elevation. As such a loss of privacy would occur from the new first floor windows nearest the common boundary.
10. Whilst I am aware that the en-suite opening could be obscure glazed with a fixed lower casement, I do not consider it to be satisfactory to require the bedroom window to be similarly served, as this would not provide for an adequate level of outlook to the habitable room.
11. Consequently, the scheme would be adversely harmful to the living conditions of the occupants of neighbouring houses in respect of privacy. It would fail to adhere to policy CS19 of the CS, which states that new development will be located, designed and constructed to safeguard the amenity of the occupants of neighbouring properties. It would also be inconsistent with the Framework which seeks to ensure safe and healthy living conditions.

Conclusion

12. Given the foregoing and all arguments raised, I dismiss the appeal.

C Hall

INSPECTOR