The Planning Inspectorate

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 4 May 2023

by G Roberts BA (Hons) MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 18 May 2023.

Appeal Ref: APP/D3640/D/23/3318252
67 Blackdown Road, Deepcut, Camberley, Surrey, GU16 6QJ

- 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 D Womersley against the decision of Surrey Heath Borough Council.
- The application Ref. 22/1288/FFU, dated 13 December 2022, was refused by notice dated 8 February 2023.
- The development proposed is erection of two storey side extension, a single storey rear extension following the demolition of the existing conservatory, a single storey front/side infill extension, and the installation of two dormer windows to the front roof slope and one dormer window to the rear roof slope to facilitate a loft conversion into habitable accommodation.

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. I have adopted the description of development as set out in the decision notice as this more accurately describes the proposal.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the host property and surrounding area.

Reasons

4. The appeal site is located on the southern side of Blackdown Road and comprises a semi-detached bungalow. The other half of the semi to the host property is 69 Blackdown Road (No.69), which is also a single storey bungalow. Similar style bungalows are located to the south west of the appeal site on the corner with Bellew Road. All of these bungalows remain largely as built and with their roofscapes intact. To the east of the appeal site is a detached two storey property, beyond which are further semi-detached bungalows. The land opposite the appeal site, to the north, comprises woodland.

5. The appeal proposal comprises a number of elements including a single storey rear extension to which the Council have not raised any objection. Whilst the Council have objected to the proposed two storey side extension, I consider this element of the appeal proposal to be acceptable. The proposed width of this extension is modest and it would be designed to be sympathetic to the host property and would thus not erode the character of the streetscene. It

would not project beyond the main building line of the host and would retain a gap of over 1 metre between the new extension and the side boundary with the neighbouring property. As such, this aspect of the appeal proposal would largely comply with Principles 10.1 and 10.3 of the Council's Residential Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (September 2017) (SPD). Whilst this SPD also requires side extensions to be subservient to the host, given the modest scale of the proposed extension and its sympathetic design I am satisfied that any conflict with the SPD in this respect would be limited and not harmful.

6. The Council's objection to the proposed side extension relates to the reduction of the existing gap with the side boundary to its neighbour. However, Principle 10.3 of the SPD requires a gap of 1 metre to the side boundary and as I confirmed above the retained gap would be greater than this. Moreover, I am not convinced that, as the Council contend, the existing gap is of any visual importance or makes any positive contribution to the semi-rural character of the area.

7. In relation to the proposed dormers on the front roof slope, I am again satisfied that this element of the appeal proposal would be acceptable. The new dormers would be sited well above the eaves of the host and below its ridge, as well as being set in from the sides of the front roof slope. The proposed dormers would be proportionate and subservient to the host and whilst they would not exactly align with the existing ground floor windows they are of a similar size and the lack of symmetry would not lead to any harmful impact on the appearance of the host or the streetscene.

8. As such, the proposed dormers would largely comply with Principles 10.1 and 10.5 of the SPD, as well as Principles 7.8 and 7.9. Although the Council appear to imply that front dormers are not a characteristic of the area they are an accepted and common feature of loft conversions and there is nothing in the SPD which suggests that front dormers are in principle unacceptable. Indeed, a number of the images and photographs in the SPD appear to show dormers on the front elevation indicating that this form of development is acceptable provided they are of a good quality design and sit comfortably on the roof slope in question.

9. With regard to the proposed dormer on the rear elevation of the host, this would occupy the majority of the roof slope and would sit marginally below the main ridge and just above the eaves, and be marginally set in from the sides of the roof slope. As such, the scale, height, width and mass of the proposed dormer would be excessive and overly dominant within the existing roofscape to the host property and wider streetscene. The proposal would overwhelm the original rear roof slope to the host and this impact would be accentuated by the large expanse of flat roof and the fact that the roofscape to the other half of this semi, No.69, is intact.

10. Whilst I accept that the proposed dormer is at the rear, as I observed on my site visit the rear of the host is visible from various public vantage points. From these viewpoints the proposed dormer would neither appear subservient or proportional and would introduce a design feature that is out of scale and out of keeping with the host and its surroundings. Overall, the proposed rear dormer would not sit comfortably on the appeal site and would result in a development that is harmful to the character and appearance of the host

property and surrounding area. Consequently, this aspect of the appeal proposal would be in conflict with Principles 7.8, 7.9, 10.1 and 10.5 of the SPD

11. Reference has been made to examples of existing dormer windows elsewhere in the area. However, most of these are dormers that are much smaller in scale to the proposed rear dormer and are subservient to their hosts, and also proportional in that they occupy only a small part of the roof slope in question. Most of the examples also relate to dormers on the front elevation. For these reasons, they are not, in my view, comparable to the proposed rear dormer and do not affect the findings I have reached on this issue.

12. Accordingly, I find that the proposed rear dormer would be contrary to policy DM9 of the Surrey Heath Core Strategy & Development Management Policies 2011 – 2028 (February 2012), Principles 7.8, 7.9, 10.1 and 10.5 of the SPD and paragraph 130 of the National Planning Policy Framework (July 2021). The latter and policy DM9 seek, amongst other requirements, to ensure that new development is of a high quality, respects and enhances local character and is appropriate in terms of its scale, massing, bulk and appearance.

Conclusion

13. For the reasons given above and having taken all other matters raised into account I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

G Roberts

INSPECTOR