



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 30 May 2023

by C Carpenter BA MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 12 JULY 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/D5120/W/22/3312786

67 Longmead Drive, Sidcup DA14 4NY

- 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 McCarthy against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Bexley.
 - The application Ref 22/02207/FUL, dated 31 August 2022, was refused by notice dated 25 October 2022.
 - The development proposed is the erection of one x 2 bed dwelling with associated parking and amenity space.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for the erection of one x 2 bed dwelling with associated parking and amenity space at 67 Longmead Drive, Sidcup DA14 4NY in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref 22/02207/FUL, dated 31 August 2022, and the plans submitted with it, subject to the conditions in the schedule at the end of this decision.

Preliminary Matter

2. Since the Council determined the planning application, it has adopted the Bexley Local Plan (BLP). The policies in the BLP supersede policies from the Bexley Local Development Framework Core Strategy and saved policies from the Bexley Unitary Development Plan which were included in the Council's reason for refusal of the planning application. I have determined the appeal based on the current applicable policies in the BLP, in addition to the policies in the London Plan (LP) referred to in the Council's reason for refusal. The parties to the appeal have been made aware of this and provided comments.

Main Issue

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

Reasons

4. The area surrounding the appeal site is suburban and residential. Houses are mostly two-storey and of similar traditional appearance, with hipped roofs. Front building lines are generally consistent, with many front gardens used in part for off-street parking. The appeal site is situated on the corner of a modest crescent of houses in an otherwise broadly rectilinear street layout. Gaps between the houses on Longmead Drive are generally small or filled by attached garages, with few side gardens. The crescent has a more spacious feel because it faces an area of open space and there are gaps between some

of the houses. Most nearby dwellings are semi-detached, although the houses on either side of the appeal site are detached.

5. The proposed house's two wings, one facing the main street and the other facing the start of the crescent, would provide a front building line in common with both neighbouring houses. This layout, along with similar ridge and eaves heights, would incorporate the two detached houses into a cohesive group of three, making effective use of the corner plot. The hipped roof form would complement the appearance of surrounding roofs, despite having a different configuration to others nearby. Matching external materials can be secured by condition to achieve further integration. The design of the front garden to include parking would be comparable in its layout and appearance with many in the surrounding area.
6. I accept the proposal would change the appearance of the corner by filling the gap between the two detached houses. However, the common set-back of the buildings would still provide an open feel to the frontages and the new house's modest size would not be dominant. From Kimberley Avenue, the house would appear as a continuation of Longmead Drive so the proximity of the new and existing dwellings would not be out of place. In addition, the spacious feel associated with the open space opposite the crescent and the gaps between the other houses surrounding it would not be diminished. Consequently, the change in the appearance of the corner would not have a harmful effect on the character of the street scene.
7. I have considered the argument that the appeal site should remain like its counterpart at the other end of the crescent, No 61, where the front/side garden contributes to local character and openness. However, there is a variety of built form around the crescent and each plot has distinct characteristics. The corner at No 61 is not fully open because there are outbuildings to the side that restrict glimpses of the gardens behind. In addition, the layout of the front/side garden there is different from the appeal site because it is associated with a semi-detached pair that has been extended to create an uncommonly wide building for the street. The substantial area of soft landscaping is also accommodated by an unusual side driveway. Consequently, the corner plots at the two ends of the crescent are not directly comparable. For these reasons, I give this consideration little weight.
8. For the above reasons, I conclude the proposed development would not have a harmful effect on the character and appearance of the surrounding area. Accordingly, I find no conflict with Policies D3 and D4 of the LP or Policies SP5, DP2 and DP11 of the BLP. These policies seek good design that protects the best elements of Bexley's character; support residential development on infill sites where the capacity of the site is optimised through a design-led approach; and require layout, height, scale, massing, façade treatment and materials to complement the surrounding area. I also find no conflict with the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) where this seeks high quality design that is sympathetic to local character; or with Design for Living – Bexley's Residential Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document, which sets out the principles of good design by addressing site context.
9. In response to my question about applicable policies in the BLP, the Council also referred to Policies SP1, DP13 and DP23. Policy SP1 is an overarching policy on spatial strategy, Policy DP13 relates to local views and Policy DP23

covers parking management. Given these policies do not specifically address character and appearance, they are not directly relevant to the main issue in this decision.

Other Matters

10. Concerns have been raised about parking, the lack of a downstairs toilet in the new house, private amenity space for the new dwelling, the effect of the proposed alleyway on neighbouring gardens, and overlooking. The Council has raised no issue with the proposed parking arrangements. It is also satisfied the proposal would provide acceptable living conditions for future occupiers, cause no harm to neighbouring occupiers, and be consistent with the development plan in these respects. From the evidence before me, I see no reason to disagree with these conclusions, subject to the conditions set out below.
11. Another concern relates to the perceived loss of remaining green garden corridor. Little evidence has been provided to substantiate this argument, so I give this consideration little weight.
12. It has been put to me a side extension would be more appropriate for the appeal site than a separate dwelling. No alternative proposal is before me and I have considered the appeal proposal on its own merits, as applied for and determined by the Council.

Conditions

13. I have considered the conditions put forward by the Council and have amended the wording where necessary in the interests of clarity and simplicity. In addition to the standard time limit condition, I have imposed a condition requiring that the development is carried out in accordance with the approved plans. This is in the interest of certainty.
14. The condition on external materials is necessary to integrate the appearance of the new and existing dwellings. The conditions regarding vehicle parking and pedestrian visibility splays are necessary in the interests of effective parking management and highway safety. The condition on bicycle storage is necessary to promote active travel. The condition on refuse/recycling storage is necessary to achieve good refuse management.
15. Justification for the wholesale removal of freedoms to carry out small-scale alterations and extensions is not specific or precise enough to meet the tests of necessity and reasonableness.

Conclusion

16. For the above reasons the proposal accords with the development plan, when read as a whole. Material considerations, including the Framework, do not indicate that a decision should be taken other than in accordance with the development plan. Having regard to all other matters raised, I therefore conclude the appeal should be allowed.

C Carpenter

INSPECTOR

Schedule of conditions

- 1) The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than 3 years from the date of this decision.
- 2) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: 67 Longmead Drive/P/A/004.
- 3) No development above ground shall take place until details of the materials to be used in the external surfaces of the development have been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The details shall include brickwork, windows, doors, soffits, external guttering, roofing materials and paving. Development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.
- 4) Notwithstanding condition 2 no development above ground shall take place until details of refuse/recycling storage have been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. Development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details before the dwelling is occupied. The refuse/recycling storage shall thereafter be kept available for the storage of refuse/recycling.
- 5) Notwithstanding condition 2 no development above ground shall take place until details of bicycle storage have been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. Development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details before the dwelling is occupied. The bicycle storage shall thereafter be kept available for the parking of bicycles.
- 6) The building shall not be occupied until the area shown as parking spaces on drawing No P/A/004 Proposed Site/Block Plan has been laid out, drained and surfaced in accordance with details that shall first have been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority and that area shall thereafter be kept available at all times for the parking of vehicles.
- 7) The building shall not be occupied until the vehicle access has been provided with those parts of 2.4m x 2.4m pedestrian visibility splays that can be accommodated within the site in both directions. The vehicle access shall thereafter be maintained free of all obstructions to visibility between the heights of 0.6m and 2m above the level of the adjoining highway.