The Planning Inspectorate

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 5 September 2023

by H Lock BA(Hons) DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 19 September 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/D5120/D/23/3324329
4 Onslow Drive, Sidcup, Bexley, DA14 4PB

- 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 Josh Turner against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Bexley.
- The application Ref. 23/00718/FUL, dated 28 March 2023, was refused by notice dated 8 June 2023.
- The development proposed is demolition of conservatory, double storey rear extension with skylights, dormer to front elevation and first floor, flat roof porch extension.

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matters

2. The description of development has been taken from the planning application form. The Council's decision notice has an alternative wording, but as the parties have not provided written confirmation that a revised description of development has been agreed I have used the one given in the original application.

3. As part of the appeal submission, the appellant offered to reduce the depth of the front extension by removing the canopy, and to replace the proposed front dormer window with a skylight. However, there is no scope to submit revised plans as part of this appeal, and the changes are too significant to be addressed by planning conditions. As such I have determined the appeal on the basis of the scheme applied for.

Main Issues

4. The main issues are the effect of the proposal on (1) the character and appearance of the appeal property, the semi-detached pair of which it forms part and the wider area; and (2) the living conditions of occupants of 2 Onslow Drive, with particular reference to outlook.

Reasons

Character and Appearance

5. The appeal property is a semi-detached single-storey dwelling. Within the wider area the size and style of dwellings is mixed, but the appeal property is one of a group of similar original design, form and hipped roof profile. Some

bungalows of this style in the area have been extended, including loft conversions with rooflights and rear dormer windows, and some hip-to-gable alterations. Front dormer windows are not a common feature in the vicinity.

6. I appreciate that the depth of the rear extension would be no greater than the conservatory which it would replace, but it would be significantly different in terms of scale and massing. The proposal would effectively add a two-storey extension to a single-storey property, and as a result of its size, design and flat-roofed form it would be out of keeping with the character and appearance of the dwelling. There are other hip-to-gable roof extensions in the area, but added as part of this proposal, it would materially increase the bulk. Combined with its width, being wider than the host property, the rear extension would be unacceptably dominant on the dwelling and the semi-detached pair of properties of which it forms part.

7. The discordant design and scale of the rear extension would be apparent from outside of the site due to the gap between this and the neighbouring property, 6 Onslow Drive. The proposal would fail to have regard to the Design and Development Control Guideline 2 (DCG2) of the Council's Supplementary Planning Document, which advises that loft and roof space extensions should not by reason of their design or massing be detrimental to the form of the existing roof; and that all roof extensions should be set back from the main wall of the dwelling on which they are proposed to avoid creating the appearance of an extra storey.

8. The DCG2 makes no mention of front dormer windows. However, as noted above, they are not prevalent in the area, although a number of loft conversions have included rooflights on front roof slopes, thereby maintaining the original roof form. In this context, despite its modest size, the front dormer would add to the overall scale and massing of the proposal, and would appear somewhat incongruous in the roofscape. The proposal would therefore detract from the character and appearance of the dwelling, the pair of which it forms part, and the area.

9. Given the existing flat-roofed porch at the property and the presence of others in the vicinity, in design terms I consider the proposed single-storey front extension to be acceptable.

10. The appellant has drawn attention to a number of extensions and alterations in Onslow Drive and Longmead Drive, including hip-to-gable changes, although no details of the circumstances of their construction have been supplied. As such, it is not known if planning permission was required or obtained for these developments, or which (if any) planning policies they were assessed against. However, whilst the examples cited offer some support for extensions to the dwelling, those visible at the appeal site visit did not appear to share the same design, form and massing as proposed in this case; most dormer windows appeared to be confined to the original roof slope rather than being built over rear extensions. As such, they do not justify acceptance of the appeal scheme.

11. I therefore conclude that the proposal would detract from the character and appearance of the appeal property, the semi-detached pair of which it forms part and the wider area. It would not ensure that the scale, massing, and façade treatment are complimentary to the surrounding area and contribute positively to the street scene, as required by Policy DP11 of the Bexley Local Plan 2023 (BLP). It would also conflict with aspects of DCG2, which amongst

other criteria requires extensions to be subordinate to the existing building, and for its design and external appearance to respect the character of the existing and adjacent buildings. The adverse impact would also conflict with paragraph 130 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework), as it would not add to the overall quality of the area or be sympathetic to local character, including the surrounding built environment.

Living Conditions

12. The appeal property and the attached bungalow, 2 Onslow Drive (No.2) share the same original design, with projecting hipped roofed front wings. Both have small porches. The layout of both properties means that each has a front-facing habitable room window set back within the recess between these porches and wings.

13. The proposed front extension would have a solid wall adjacent to the shared boundary with No.2. It would be deeper than the existing porches. As a result of its solid construction and depth, the proposed front extension would create an oppressive sense of enclosure to the outlook from the habitable room window of No.2, with the window being 'sandwiched' between the two porches and wings.

14. The appellant has drawn attention to other front extensions in the vicinity, but in the absence of further details it is not known if these required or obtained express planning permission. However, most in the vicinity appear to be of more lightweight, glazed construction than proposed in this case, with any which are positioned as close to the shared boundary being shallower in depth.

15. I therefore conclude that the proposal would diminish the outlook from No.2 to an extent that the living conditions of occupants would be harmed. This would be contrary to BLP Policy DP11, which amongst other criteria requires extensions to ensure that appropriate levels of outlook are provided, and that existing properties' amenity is appropriately protected; and DCG2, which requires that development should not adversely affect the amenity of adjoining properties, including outlook. This is consistent with paragraph 130 of the Framework, which seeks to ensure that developments create places with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users.

Other Matter

16. I appreciate that the appellant considered that the proposal should have been resolved by the parties working proactively together, but this does not alter my assessment that the Council's formal decision was justified for the reasons outlined above.

Conclusion

17. For the above reasons, I conclude that this appeal should be dismissed.

H Lock

INSPECTOR