



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 13 October 2023

by Lewis Condé BSc (Hons), MSc, MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 20th October 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/M3645/D/23/3325625

12 Beechwood, Church Hill, Caterham, Surrey CR3 6SB

- 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 Simon Cranstoun against the decision of Tandridge District Council.
 - The application Ref TA/2022/1093, dated 9 August 2022, was refused by notice dated 20 April 2023.
 - The development proposed is described as 'Two storey infill extension to front elevation at existing entrance'.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the host property and surrounding area.

Reasons

3. The appeal property is a three-storey end of terrace dwelling, set within a block that share a highly consistent design and appearance. The site is located to the south-east of Church Hill, with a private drive providing access to two similar terrace blocks as well as private parking areas. The surrounding area is predominantly residential, albeit Caterham town centre is located nearby.
4. The appeal property and neighbouring dwellings are set significantly down from the main road, with the property being built into the site's levels resulting in a two-storey frontage with three-storey rear elevation. An abundance of mature vegetation alongside Church Hill provides the area with a rather verdant character and also largely screens the appeal property from public vantage points.
5. As indicated, the existing terrace that the appeal property sits within has a highly uniformed appearance, due to their consistent heights, use of materials and detailing. Notably, the front elevation of each dwelling in the terrace contains a forward projection and a slightly recessed element. The consistent recessed elements to the front of the dwellings within the terrace provide continuity and rhythm, as well as helping to visually break up the terrace block that would otherwise be a substantial mass of building. I therefore find the recessed areas to provide an important architectural role, adding visual interest to the terrace block and preventing it from appearing unduly bulky.

6. The proposed two-storey extension would involve infilling the recessed element at the front of the appeal dwelling. The proposal would incorporate materials to match the existing property, whilst the main roofscape and overall profile of the terrace of dwellings would remain largely intact. However, the proposal would effectively result in the front of the property displaying a rather flat faced, box-like, two storey frontage. The proposal would extinguish the visual relief that the recessed frontage currently provides and instead appear as a rather dominant addition to the host dwelling.
7. Additionally, the proposal would result in a sizeable flat roof to the full width of the appeal dwelling's frontage, which would sit awkwardly and somewhat disjointedly alongside the pitch roof to the remainder of the building.
8. The proposal would therefore harm the character and appearance of the host dwelling. It would also be at odds with the wider terrace of properties within which it sits, detracting from their highly uniformed, rhythmic, appearance.
9. I appreciate that the appeal property is not of a remarkable design quality, whilst it is not a designated heritage asset or located in a conservation area. However, this does not override the need to secure development of a suitable high-quality design that respects its surrounding context.
10. The proposal would not be highly visible from public vantage points due to the presence of existing mature vegetation and the topography of the area. Nonetheless, it remains that the appeal scheme would unacceptably diminish the character, appearance, and integrity of the host building. Although highly localised in its extent, there would also be consequent harm to the character and appearance of the surrounding area. Furthermore, the presence of vegetation should not be relied upon to screen otherwise unacceptable development, given that there can be no certainty over the future retention of the vegetation.
11. Overall, I find the design of the proposal would harm the character and appearance of the host property with resultant harm also to the surrounding area. Accordingly, the proposal conflicts with Policies CP18 of the Tandridge District Core Strategy (adopted 2008), Policy DP7 of the Tandridge District Local Plan Part 2: Detailed Policies 2014 – 2029 (adopted 2014) and Policy CCW4 of the Caterham, Chaldon and Whyteleafe Neighbourhood Plan (made 2021). Together these policies, amongst other matters, seek to secure development of a high design quality that reflects its surrounding context.
12. The proposal would also not conform to the aims of Chapter 12 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) that seeks to promote high quality design.

Other Matters

13. Whilst I have given the appellant's personal circumstances careful consideration, I am mindful of the advice contained in Planning Practice Guidance¹ that in general planning is concerned with land use in the public interest. It is also probable that the proposed development would remain long after the appellant's current personal circumstances cease to be relevant. For these reasons, I therefore find that this factor is not sufficient to outweigh the

¹ Paragraph: 008 Reference ID: 21b-008-20140306

harm that would be caused through conflict with the development plan and the Framework.

14. The appellant has drawn my attention to a two-storey front/side extension nearby at no. 6 Beechwood, which is a neighbouring terrace block of properties complete in the same style as the block that the appeal dwelling sits within. I do not have full details of that development, including its planning history, albeit from the information before me it appears to be a relatively long-standing development. Nevertheless, from my observations on site that extension is of an entirely different, and more sympathetic design, than the appellants' scheme. It's presence therefore does not justify the appeal proposal.

Conclusion

15. For the reasons outlined above and having regard to the development plan, as a whole, and all other material considerations, the appeal is dismissed.

Lewis Condé

INSPECTOR