

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 5 December 2023

by Andrew Dale BA (Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 21.12.2023

Appeal Ref. APP/N1920/D/23/3319045
87 Chandos Road, Borehamwood WD6 1UX

- 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 and Mrs T Kramer against the decision of Hertsmere Borough Council.
 - The application ref. 22/2126/HSE, dated 20 December 2022, was refused by notice dated 13 February 2023.
 - The development proposed is described on the application form as "*Ground floor front extension, First floor side and rear extension.*"
-

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main issue

2. The Council had no specific concerns regarding the first floor rear extension in itself. I see no reason to disagree with that stance. Thus, the main issue is the effect of the proposed first floor side and ground floor front extensions on the character and appearance of the dwelling and its surroundings.

Reasons

3. Like many of the dwellings on Chandos Road, no. 87 comprises a chalet-style, semi-detached house where the first floor accommodation is served by wide flat-roofed box dormers to the front and rear and a sloping roof overhangs the entire ground floor front elevation. The pairs follow a staggered alignment. There is regular separation between the original buildings but not on a significant scale. The plots are not notably spacious and this is not an area with a low density of development. Many of the houses have been extended with single storey side extensions up to the boundaries, as has occurred at no. 87.
 4. I have been referred to the Hertsmere Planning and Design Guide Part E - Guidelines for Residential Extensions and Alterations Supplementary Planning Document (SPD), adopted in November 2006. The SPD clearly carries weight as a material consideration in decision making but it is guidance as opposed to planning policy and it should not be applied prescriptively to the exclusion of all other factors, including the physical circumstances and context of a site.
-

5. One part of the scheme is to add a first floor side extension of very narrow width by extending the existing pitched roof and associated front dormer across. Looking at the proposed first floor plan, a gap of about 1 m would be left between the actual side wall of this new extension and the boundary with no. 89. Given the exceedingly modest width of the proposed first floor side extension and the staggered alignment with no. 89, which stands in advance of the appeal property, I see no reason why this extension cannot be laid out as a simple continuation of the existing building as proposed without it being set back from the front wall by 1 m or set down from the original roof ridge.
6. The side extension would appear sufficiently subordinate to the existing building, when viewed as a whole, in terms of its size, scale and appearance. Some additions to side wings could be large enough to unbalance the built form of a dwelling or a pair of semi-detached houses but this extension would not come close to doing either. Moreover, in my view the separation between nos 87 and 89 would not be reduced to a level that would produce a cramped appearance, a harmful loss of a sky gap or a damaging terracing effect.
7. In this way, this part of the project would respect the aims of the SPD. My interpretation of that document is that in this type of location it would be appropriate for first floor side extensions to be a minimum of 1 m away from the side boundary. The SPD also recognises that with staggered alignments, such extensions may not need to be set back from the front wall plane.
8. The appellants drew attention to examples of other 2-storey or first floor side additions in Chandos Road. The Council was correct to refer to the different contexts, locations and extension designs in some of those cases. I was however struck by no. 43 which has a side extension that replicates what the appellants are seeking to achieve at their home. It may have been built as close or even closer to the common boundary there than shown in the appeal proposal. This example has not been critical to my findings. It is some distance away and considering the appeal scheme on its own merits, I have found that the proposed first floor side extension would make a visually acceptable contribution to its context and location, exhibit a high standard of design and be sufficiently respectful of and sympathetic to the parent building, local character and the established street scene along Chandos Road.
9. The appellants also wish to add a ground floor front extension. They have provided little commentary about this element of the scheme other than a suggestion that it would fall within the design guidance rules issued by the Council. No analysis is given to shed light on that claim. I find that it does not stand up to scrutiny.
10. The front extension would reach across more than half the width of the existing house and be larger than a porch. It cannot be described as minor. It would contain a new porch that would be linked to a ground floor front extension providing a study. The overall extension would have sufficient depth to project in advance of the roof overhang that the current small (study) single-storey front projection subtly merges with. Visibly breaking forward of that line, it would also be finished with a crown-style roof which would emphasize the extension's size and bulk and fail to reflect the roof designs of the existing and neighbouring properties. In all these respects there would be conflict with the SPD insofar as it sets out guidance relating to front extensions and porches.

11. Being at the front, this part of the extension scheme would be very prominent in views when approaching along Chandos Road from either direction. From these public vantage points, the front extension would stand out as bulky, out of character with the uniformity of the front roof overhangs found at this and many other neighbouring houses and disruptive to the largely balanced appearance of the semi-detached pair of dwellings at nos 85 and 87. Taken together, these factors point me to the view that this part of the scheme would adversely alter the appearance of the house and be an unwelcome addition to the street scene. In reaching that view, I noted some other examples of flat-roofed front additions at nos 21, 34, 46 and 48 Chandos Road. These are not good examples to follow and only one of them (no. 48) can be said to be viewed in close proximity to no. 87.
12. I find on the main issue that the proposed ground floor front extension would materially harm the character and appearance of the dwelling and its surroundings. As this part of the development would neither attain a high-quality design nor recognise and complement the character and appearance of the dwelling and the locality, there would be conflict with the broad aims of Policies SP1 and CS22 of the Core Strategy 2013 and Policy SADM30 of the Site Allocations and Development Management Policies Plan 2016. Good design is also a cornerstone of the National Planning Policy Framework and the National Design Guide. This would not be achieved. For the avoidance of doubt, I found that the first floor side and rear extension would have been acceptable on its own; it would have complied with these policies and the relevant local and national guidance.
13. The scheme would enhance the quality of life for the occupiers of no. 87 by providing additional family accommodation on both floors and to modern living standards. The Council, correctly in my view, did not identify an excessive loss of amenity for neighbouring properties for any reason or any adverse implications for parking and highway safety. I have taken into account the absence of objections from local residents and organisations. However, these considerations are not sufficient to outweigh the harm that I have described in relation to the ground floor front extension. I realise that this was a minor part of the overall proposal, but hopefully this stumbling block can be addressed if a revised scheme (omitting or redesigning the front extension) can be agreed with the Council in the first instance.

Conclusion

14. My finding on the main issue is decisive to the outcome of this appeal. There is conflict with the development plan. The harm cannot be mitigated by the imposition of planning conditions and it is not outweighed by other considerations. For the reasons given above and taking into account all other matters raised, I conclude that this appeal should not succeed.

Andrew Dale

INSPECTOR