



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 4 December 2023

by M Cryan BA(Hons) DipTP MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 8 February 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/G5180/D/23/3329206

121 Castlecombe Road, Mottingham, London SE9 4AS

- 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 G Brazinskis against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Bromley.
 - The application Ref 23/00786/FULL6, dated 27 February 2023, was refused by notice dated 19 June 2023.
 - The development proposed is a part one/two-storey front/side and single storey rear extension.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matter

2. The Government published revised versions of the National Planning Policy Framework ("the Framework") on 5 September 2023, replacing the July 2021 version extant at the time the application was determined, and again on 19 December 2023. The amendments made did not have any bearing on the main issues in this appeal, and it was not therefore necessary to seek comments from the main parties on the updated Framework.

Main Issues

3. The main issues are the effect of the proposed extension on:
 - The character and appearance of the area; and
 - Living conditions for the occupiers of the neighbouring property at No 123 Castlecombe Road, with particular regard to whether it would be visually dominant or overbearing.

Reasons

Character and appearance

4. The appeal relates to a two-storey house at the end of a short terrace of six dwellings on the north side of Castlecombe Road. It is within a predominantly residential area mainly comprising similar houses arranged in terraces of four, six or eight, although there are also some blocks of flats of comparable scale and form. I saw on my site visit that although some of the houses have been altered and extended over the years, front extensions are rare and appear to mostly be limited to small porches (though there are some exceptions); where side extensions have been added the gaps between adjacent blocks have largely been retained. Overall, the buildings on the estate have a strong

rhythm and a sense of order which contributes significantly to the neat character and orderly appearance of the area.

5. The proposed development is the erection of a two-storey side extension, which would be built up to the shared boundary with No 123; at first-floor this would be stepped back from the side boundary by around 1m. At the front of the house, the ground floor of the extension would project forward of the main elevation by around 1m, while the rear single storey part would project around 3.5m into the rear garden. An existing single-storey extension at the rear of the house would be removed as part of the development.
6. The submitted drawings suggest that the projecting front extension would span roughly half the width of the plot. This would make it a prominent feature on the main elevation of the building, much wider than most of the other front extensions in the area, and would disrupt the established building line. The roof ridge of the side extension would be at the same height as, rather than set down from, that of the main house, and its front elevation would be aligned with, rather than set back from, the main front elevation. It would therefore be a substantial and bulky, rather than subordinate, addition to the building.
7. The proposed 1m set-back at the side of the first-floor level would go some way towards preventing the creation of a visual "terracing" effect. The total infilling of the side space at ground floor level would nevertheless give the house the appearance of being cramped within its plot, and this would be at odds with the more spacious character of the area generally. Taken as a whole, the form and scale of the front and side parts of the extension would make it a bulky and intrusive addition to the street scene, breaking up the otherwise generally consistent rhythm and order of the neighbourhood.
8. I conclude that the extension would be harmful to the character and appearance of the area. The development would therefore conflict with Policy 37 of the 2019 Bromley Local Plan ("the BLP") which among other things requires all development, including extensions, to complement the scale, proportion, form and layout of buildings in the surrounding area. It would also conflict with Policy 6 of the BLP, which requires extensions to respect or maintain spaces or gaps between buildings where these contribute to the character of the area, and with Policy 8 of the BLP which requires a minimum of 1m space from the side boundary to be retained for the full height and length of extensions of two or more storeys.

Living conditions

9. The next-door property No 123 Castlecombe Road has a two-storey side extension, with a single-storey rear ground floor extension. This has been built close to, but not right up to, the boundary with the appeal property; I have not been provided with precise details, but based on all the evidence including my observations on site it seems likely that it has been built to comply with the 1m minimum side-space requirement set out in Policy 8 of the BLP which I have described in the preceding paragraph.
10. The proposed extension would be built right up to the side of the appeal site, and there would therefore be a one-storey high brick wall along the shared boundary with No 123. This would adjoin the narrow path which gives access to the side door of No 123 and its rear garden; however, this appears to me to be purely a functional space, and the proximity of the extension would not

interfere with this role. There are no windows on the side elevation of No 123 and, although I have not been provided with details of the depth of the rear extension at No 123, my observations on site suggest that it is broadly similar to that proposed in this case. The proposed extension would not therefore generally be seen from within No 123, nor would it loom over the main space of the neighbouring rear garden.

11. I conclude that the proposed extension would not cause unacceptable harm to living conditions for the occupiers of No 123 Castlecombe Road. In this respect therefore the proposal would not conflict with Policies 6 and 37 of the BLP which, among other things, require development to be compatible with the surrounding area and to respect the amenity of occupiers of neighbouring buildings.

Other Matters

12. The appellant's statement drew my attention to No 114 Castlecombe Road, where the Council granted permission for a single-storey side and rear extension in March 2023¹. However, although I was provided with a copy of that decision notice, there is nothing before me which demonstrates how, or if, that proposal is comparable to the appeal scheme. I viewed that property during my site visit but, although it appears to have had relatively recent roof alterations, no side extension had been built. It does not therefore add weight in support of the appeal scheme.
13. The appellant suggested that "if the proposed development was reduced at ground and first floor level by 1m from the boundary, no practical living accommodation could be achieved, which would go against the thrust of sustainable development". However, other properties nearby (including the neighbouring No 123 Castlecombe Road) have been extended in a way which appears to comply with the separation requirements in the development plan. This is not therefore a persuasive argument in favour of the appeal scheme.

Planning Balance and Conclusion

14. I have found that the proposed development would not be harmful to living conditions for the occupiers of the neighbouring dwelling. However, the scale and form of the extension would be detrimental to the character and appearance of the area. The development therefore conflicts with the development plan taken as a whole.
15. There are no material considerations which indicate that the decision should be made other than in accordance with the development plan. For the reasons given above, the appeal is therefore dismissed.

M Cryan

Inspector

¹ LPA Ref: DC/23/00413/FULL6