



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 26 March 2024

by K Savage BA(Hons) MPlan MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 02 MAY 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/E5330/W/23/3325731

227 McLeod Road, Abbey Wood, Greenwich SE2 0BN

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mrs Harveen Dhillon against the decision of the Council of the Royal Borough of Greenwich.
 - The application reference is 23/0727/F.
 - The development proposed is a two storey side extension to create a new studio flat.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. I have omitted reference to a previous planning application in the description above as this does not relate to an act of development. I have also used the description of development as originally given on the application form.
3. A new version of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) was published on 19 December 2023. The parts most relevant to the appeal have not substantively changed from the previous iteration. Consequently, this does not alter the main parties' cases and it is not necessary to seek further comments. References hereafter are to the December 2023 version.

Main Issues

4. The main issues are i) the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area, and ii) whether the proposal would provide an acceptable standard of accommodation for future occupants.

Reasons

Character and Appearance

5. The appeal relates to an end-of-terrace dwelling standing at the corner of McLeod Road and Crumpsall Street. McLeod Road has a consistent pattern of two storey terraces of 8 to 10 dwellings separated by the intersecting streets. There are few examples of side extensions along McLeod Road. Within the immediate context of the junction with Crumpsall Street, there is a small garage to the side of No 229 and a shed next to No 220 opposite.
6. The proposed two storey side extension would include a step in the side elevation to create a slight L-shaped footprint, the front section measuring some 2.8 metres wide and the rear section some 3.6 metres wide. The width at the rear would exceed half the width of the existing dwelling, contrary to the

guidance of the Council's Residential Extensions, Basements and Conversions Guidance Supplementary Planning Document (December 2018) (the SPD).

7. From the rear from Crumpsall Street, the extension would be viewed alongside an existing single storey rear extension and a full-width box dormer extension on the roof. The rear wall of the extension would not be set in from the first floor rear elevation, resulting in a broad expanse and lack of articulation. The ground floor would extend further and adjoin the existing rear extension, forming a wraparound effect. The cumulative array of extensions would result in a disjointed appearance due to the different heights, depths and roof forms. When viewed in combination with the large dormer, the extensions would overwhelm and severely erode the legibility of the original dwelling. The corner position of the site means these impacts would be clearly visible within the streetscene.
8. Viewed from the front, the extension would not appear disproportionate in width or scale relative to the host dwelling, as it would be recessed from the front elevation and the roofline would be set lower than the main roof. The wider rear section would also be further recessed and with the roof lower again. I recognise that the design stems from an intent to portray the development as a side extension to No 227. However, the proposal is to create a separate dwelling which would be identifiable by its own front entrance and would be significantly narrower than neighbouring dwellings and wholly different in form, lacking characteristic features such as the bay windows and porch canopies. Consequently, it would appear as an anomalous addition to the street scene that would harmfully interrupt the consistent, symmetrical appearance of the terrace.
9. The appellant refers to a number of other developments permitted by the Council. Each of these examples involved an extension to the dwelling, rather than creation of a separate unit. From the evidence before me, each of these examples differ from the appeal scheme in terms of the form of the proposal, the site circumstances and/or surrounding pattern of development. An appeal decision is also referred to me, but I have no accompanying details such as plans and I am unable to ascertain if the circumstances are similar. Therefore, I do not regard these examples as directly comparable to the nature or design of the appeal scheme, and they do not alter the conclusions I have reached on the specific planning merits of the proposal.
10. For these reasons, I conclude that the proposal would significantly harm the character and appearance of the area, contrary to Policy D3 of the London Plan (March 2021) (the LP21), Policies DH1 and DH(a) of the Royal Borough of Greenwich Adopted Core Strategy (with Detailed Policies) (July 2014) (the CS) and the guidance of the Residential Extensions, Basements and Conversions SPD, which together expect high quality new development that positively contributes to the improvement of the built environment, taking account of existing townscapes, layout, spatial character, architecture, scale and massing. These policies are consistent with the aspirations for high quality design set out in the Framework.

Standard of Accommodation

11. Policy D6 of the LP21 requires new dwellings to be of high quality design and to meet the internal floorspace and room size requirements of Table 3.1. The proposal is described as a one person 'studio' measuring 41 square metres

(sqm) in floorspace. However, a 'studio' typically comprises a single space for living, dining and sleeping in an open plan layout over a single floor. Hence Table 3.1 does not provide a floorspace figure for a single person studio over two floors. The closest measure within Table 3.1 would be a one-bedroom, two-person flat over two storeys at 58 sqm, against which the proposal would fall significantly short. Indeed, it would also fall short of the 50sqm requirement for a one-bedroom, two-person flat over one storey.

12. The Council has also pointed to the bedroom when measured being some 11.8 sqm rather than the 9.6 sqm shown on the plans, and thus being large enough to constitute a double bedroom. The appellant has not specifically disputed this measurement. Nevertheless, I recognise the proposal was made for a one-person flat and I have considered the proposal on this basis.
13. However, even if I accept that the floorspace of the dwelling would exceed the 37 sqm requirement for a one-person studio, the fact that it is spread across two floors means that some of the internal area is effectively lost as usable space to accommodate the staircase and circulation areas at either end of it. This undermines the essential advantage of a studio as a versatile, open plan space.
14. Instead, the proposed layout would have separate living and sleeping areas on different floors more akin to a typical dwelling. The narrow footprint, coupled with the need to include a staircase, would result in a tight, confined layout with limited room to comfortably move about the space, more so once furniture is introduced. This would be particularly so on the ground floor where the living room would be confined to a narrow space of less than two metres width that would also function as the main through route from the front door to the kitchen and stairs. This would result in cramped and oppressive living conditions for a future resident, even on a single occupancy basis.
15. I accept that the proposal would comply with relevant standards in other respects, including ceiling heights, dual aspect outlook, bathroom and storage provision. However, these are required of every new dwelling to achieve a minimum standard and are not representative of an otherwise high design quality that would overcome the significant constraints arising from the cramped layout. I afford some positive weight to the provision of more outdoor space than required for a unit of the size proposed, but I am not persuaded that this alone would mitigate for the shortcomings in the internal layout, which would be the space used by occupants the majority of the time.
16. For these reasons, I conclude that the proposal would fail to provide a satisfactory standard of accommodation for future occupants, in conflict with the requirements for high quality housing design set out under Policy D6 of the LP21 and Policies DH1 and H5 of the CS, and in the Mayors Housing Supplementary Planning Guidance (March 2016).

Other Matters

17. The Council did not oppose the application in terms of its effect on the living conditions of neighbouring occupants or highway safety, and matters including provision of cycle and bin storage were found to be acceptable. On the evidence before me, I have no reasons to conclude differently to the Council in these matters. However, an absence of harm in these respects means they are neutral considerations in the overall planning balance.

Conclusion

18. The Council accepts that it cannot demonstrate a five year supply of deliverable housing sites, with supply given at 3.1 years. Consequently, the tilted balance at Paragraph 11 of the Framework is engaged, which states that permission should be granted unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the Framework taken as a whole.
19. The proposal would deliver an additional dwelling in an accessible location at a time when the Council is falling well short of demonstrating a sufficient supply of deliverable housing sites, a benefit weighing strongly in favour of the proposal in the circumstances. There would also be modest benefits in terms of the economic activity generated in the construction of the dwelling and subsequently by future occupants in patronising local businesses.
20. Set against this, I have found that the proposal would cause demonstrable harm to the character and appearance of the area and would provide an unacceptable standard of accommodation. This conflicts with the clear guidance of the Framework that the creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve, and that developments should create places that promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users.
21. Taken together, I find that the adverse impacts associated with granting planning permission would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when considered against the policies of the Framework, taken as a whole. Consequently, the Framework does not indicate that permission should be forthcoming, and there are no other material considerations that would justify a decision being made other than in accordance with the development plan, where I also find there to be conflict when considered as a whole.
22. Therefore, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

K Savage

INSPECTOR