



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 16 September 2024

by Robin Buchanan BA (Hons) MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 15 November 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/L3625/D/24/3338089

Homefield, Walpole Avenue, Chipstead, Surrey CR5 3PN

- 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 Jonathan Dunham against the decision of Reigate and Banstead Borough Council.
 - The application Ref is 23/02238/HHOLD.
 - The development proposed was described as 'new first floor extension to existing dwelling with new roof; replacement windows; use of flat roof as terrace'.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. After the appeal was lodged, the Council designated Chipstead Walpole Avenue & Starrock Green Conservation Area, which includes the site. The Council confirmed that Walpole Avenue Residential Area of Special Character, which also includes the site, remains extant. After this Conservation Area was designated, the Council granted planning permission for a similar proposal to extend Homefield (the approved house)¹. I have taken these considerations into account, including comments from the main parties in these respects. I have, though, determined this appeal on its individual planning merits.

Background and Main Issue

3. The Council did not object to the replacement windows or to using an existing flat roof as a terrace. Nor do I. The main issue is therefore the effect of the first floor extension with new roof on the character and appearance of Homefield, Chipstead Walpole Avenue & Starrock Green Conservation Area (the CA) and Walpole Avenue Residential Area of Special Character (the RASC).

Reasons

4. Homefield is a large, detached chalet bungalow in a large, landscaped garden plot. It was built in the 1920s, designed in a neo-Georgian arts and crafts style by a renowned local architect Blair Imrie. It has since been extended and includes a narrow, wide rectangular floorplan, white render elevations and a red/brown tiled hipped main roof with some shallow, wide flat roofed dormer windows. It faces Walpole Avenue at a slight angle, close to it amongst some trees.

¹ Ref 24/00342/HHOLD

5. The CA incorporates the RASC. These, respectively, designated and non-designated heritage assets² share many distinctive features. This includes large, individually designed mostly early 20th century detached houses, many in a Surrey vernacular arts and crafts style also by Blair Imrie or other local distinguished architects. In Walpole Avenue they are arranged in rows along both sides of this long cul-de-sac in large, landscaped garden plots often set amongst trees and usually near the road to form a discrete pocket of residential development that is in essence the RASC. Though not a statutory or locally listed building, Homefield therefore makes a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the CA and the RASC.
6. The first floor extension would be across all of Homefield, capped by an entirely new main roof without dormer windows. There would be no increase in the density of residential development, change to the floorplan or an overly disproportionate increase in floor area or building volume by comparison with other dwellings in Walpole Avenue. Nevertheless, the resulting two-storey house and raising of the building as a whole would obscure most semblance of the historic single-story form and presence of this building on the site.
7. Walpole Avenue passes the site as a long slope, with Homefield on the inside of a shallow bend. Though in part set down from this road it can be observed from different directions around this bend. Most houses to the north, on the site side of this road, are in more open plots with less treed gardens but set much further below road level, so the full extent of their scale and massing is not readily apparent. Whereas houses to the south of Homefield, on both sides of the road, are mostly near, at or above road level. While these houses have greater innate visual and spatial presence in this part of the streetscene they are within more contained, enclosed landscaped gardens amongst more trees and boundary hedgerow.
8. Previous extension of Homefield altered its initial symmetry, but low down at ground floor and existing roof level this is not especially noticeable. While the entrance door to Homefield is already off-set in the front elevation to one shorter side, there would be a substantial increase in the scale and massing of built form at first floor and higher roof level in the other wider side. A two-storey house would not be incompatible in this part of Walpole Avenue, but the proposed design would give an overly long and demonstrably unbalanced asymmetric main façade at two-storey height. This would be accentuated by the incongruous extent of blank elevation (gap) between two first floor front windows, so detract from the visual integrity and cohesion of this part of the house and the building overall.
9. The taller, squarer proportioned south side elevation of the house would not be unduly prominent, partly inset into rising ground levels and angled away from Walpole Road behind boundary trees and hedgerow. However, though no closer to Walpole Avenue and despite a shallow roof pitch, the corresponding additional elevated built form in the north end of the house would be angled towards this road. This mostly blank side elevation would reinforce the sheer vertical extent of the building rising abruptly in relation to the falling gradient on this part of the site; which also has a more open aspect, including through the wide driveway entrance and less boundary trees. Hedgerow on this lower side of Homefield is also less effective as a screen. Consequently, the

² National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) Annex 2: Glossary

significant uplift in height scale, bulk and massing of this end of the first floor extension, and this part of the new roof, would erode openness and be unduly prominent in upward public view from this lower section of Walpole Avenue with an overbearing, dominant presence in this part of the streetscene. There is no evidence that trees or hedgerow would need to be removed but, albeit in a small way, this protuberance of built form would detract from and diminish the verdant, spacious feel to this part of the CA and the RASC.

10. The house would reflect some important features of Homefield, including as originally built, such as a simple rectilinear floorplan and building envelope with a strong horizontal emphasis, regimented placement of windows and a matching roof form uncluttered by dormer windows. The design would still be unique and retain an arts and crafts style. A two-storey house sited close to the road would also be compatible with the prevailing dwelling type and layout in this part of the CA and in the RASC. The palette of external materials including white rendered elevations and red/brown clay roof tiles would complement the retained ground floor of Homefield and could be secured by a condition. Nevertheless, despite this and any of the other conditions suggested by the Council or the appellant, these considerations would not overcome the adverse impacts identified above. The first floor extension and new roof is manifestly greater than that in the approved house, which steps down to single-storey at the north end, so can be clearly distinguished from it.
11. Other original or extended dwellings in Walpole Avenue are comparable in design in some respects to Homefield or the proposal. But there is no evidence that any are the same in type, form or size of dwelling or garden plot or reflect the same proposal as in this appeal. Nor are they located in the same place in the streetscene, with the same topography and orientation to this road. Planning history listed by the appellant includes planning permission for a two-storey extension to Homefield³. Though no plans have been provided there is no evidence that this planning permission is extant.
12. Taking account of all the above, I find that the first floor extension with new roof would have a negative effect on the character and appearance of Homefield, the CA and the RASC. This would undermine the significance of the CA, so fail to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the CA⁴ and erode the significance of the RASC. Consequently, the proposal as a whole does not comply with Policies DES1, DES3 and NHE9 of the Reigate & Banstead Development Management Plan, September 2019. These policies include that development in the CA and the RASC should protect and preserve these historic environments with high quality design. It should make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the area and promote or reinforce local distinctiveness and the visual appearance of the immediate streetscene with regard to scale, massing, elevations, height and important views into the site.

Heritage Balance

13. The NPPF includes objectives to conserve and enhance the historic environment and to achieve well-designed, beautiful buildings and places. It sets out that heritage assets, such as in this case the CA and the RASC, are an irreplaceable resource and should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their

³ Ref 92/04150/F

⁴ Section 72(1) - Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (as amended)

significance. The aims of the Council's relevant development plan policies in these regards are consistent with these provisions of the NPPF, so are not out of date and have significant weight in this appeal.

14. The proposal is not for the provision of housing in that there would be no net gain in dwellings. It would, though, improve the thermal efficiency of building fabric so reduce carbon emissions and increase the sustainability of the property, in-line with objectives of the NPPF for climate change. These gains from a single dwelling would be modest, so this public benefit has limited weight in support of the appeal.
15. Set against this, a significant part of the proposal would cause notable innate harm and loss to the significance of the RASC, which in this case is also an integral part of the CA. Conserving the significance of the CA attracts great weight. The proposal would have an unacceptable impact on the significance of part of the CA, so the overall harm to the CA would be less than substantial. Accordingly, the public benefits would not outweigh this harm and there is no clear and convincing justification for the proposal overall.

Other Matters

16. I appreciate that the appellant wishes to improve, in particular, the first floor living accommodation of Homefield as a family sized dwelling. This convenience would also be available to future occupiers of the house. But the extent of the proposal before me is a personal preference, whereas planning operates in the wider public interest. As such, this private benefit has little weight in support of the appeal.

Planning Balance and Conclusion

17. The proposal conflicts with policies of the development plan. Other material considerations, including relevant provisions of the NPPF, do not indicate that the appeal should be decided other than in accordance with the development plan taken as a whole⁵. Consequently, for the reasons given above the appeal does not succeed.

Robin Buchanan

INSPECTOR

⁵ Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended)