



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 4 April 2025

by **Gary Deane BSc (Hons) DipTP MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 24 April 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/B5480/W/24/3354511

1 Essex Close, Romford RM7 8BD

- 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 Mr D Shorey against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Havering.
 - The application reference is P1029.24.
 - The development proposed is the conversion of existing side extension, single storey rear extension and new 2-storey side/rear extension to form 2 additional dwellings (total 3 including existing).
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural matters

2. The appellant has requested that the appeal be determined with consideration given to an additional plan, which shows vehicle swept paths within the site. No change is sought to the substance of the appeal scheme. On that basis and given that the Council has had the opportunity to comment on this plan through the appeal process, I am satisfied that no injustice would be caused if I were to consider it. Accordingly, I shall deal with the appeal based on the drawings provided at both the application and appeal stages.
3. The Council has confirmed that the reference to a street tree in the third reason for refusal was made in error. I have assessed the appeal on that basis.
4. On 12 December 2024, a revised National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework 2024) was published with an amendment issued on 7 February 2025. The main parties were given the opportunity to comment on the Framework 2024, as amended, although no representations were received.

Main Issues

5. The main issues are the effect of the proposed development firstly, on the character and appearance of the local area; secondly, on the living conditions of future occupiers and those of properties on Toby Way with regard to visual impact; and thirdly, on highway safety for users of Essex Close.

Reasons

Character and appearance

6. The appeal property is one of a pair of 2-storey semi-detached houses with an integral garage at the end of a residential cul-de-sac along which 2-storey dwellings

- predominate. The proposal is to partly convert, alter and extend No 1 to create 2 additional dwellings thereby resulting in a 2-storey terrace of 4 dwellings in all. The site would be subdivided between the existing and new properties, with vehicle parking and bin storage provided at the front and gardens mainly to the rear.
7. The proposal would introduce a substantial built form into generally undeveloped garden space to the side and rear of No 1 that at present positively contributes to the spacious feel around the 3 sides of the appeal dwelling. This garden space, with its largely open grassed area, contributes to the local area in providing a welcome visual break between existing development within the built-up area. While the side and rear gardens of No 1 are not fully visible in the local street scene, they nonetheless encompass the characteristics of the local area as experienced from nearby houses and gardens. Having carefully viewed the site and its surroundings, I am in little doubt that the proposed built form would significantly alter the balance of space around No 1 and the pair to the extent that it would appear as a visually disruptive addition into generally open garden land.
 8. The dwellings within the new terrace would follow the same front build line and include matching external materials. When viewed from the access road into the site, the proposed 2-storey front elevation would extend across almost the full width of the plot with only a modest gap left beyond the flank wall of dwelling denoted House No 1 on the plans and the site's side boundary. Coupled with the modest depth of the front gardens of the new terrace and an uninterrupted row of vehicle parking spaces along the frontage, this arrangement would appear from the access road to form an unusually intense form of development. By adding new houses in this way, the proposal would contrast with the generally more spacious layout of the pair to which No 1 belongs, and other properties in the vicinity of the site, in which dwellings seem to occupy more generous-sized plots. In that context, the appeal scheme would be perceived as overdevelopment of the site.
 9. Each of the dwellings within the completed terrace would differ in width, size and in their pattern of fenestration compared to the dwelling(s) to which it would attach. The overall visual effect would be unconvincing because the front elevation of the proposed terrace would appear disjointed. In particular, the dwelling denoted House No 2 on the plans, would have narrower front and rear facades, a smaller back garden and a different pattern of windows than the other dwellings in the same terrace. As a result, this element of the appeal scheme would appear as if it had been squeezed into the terrace and reduced in size to fit into a restricted plot.
 10. I agree that terraced dwellings do not necessarily need to be uniform in size and appearance, nor the finished building be symmetrical. In my experience, developments that contrast in scale or style to existing development can positively contribute to the diversity of an area and add visual interest to the street scene to which they belong. However, new development should be based on a coherent street frontage and new buildings should complement local character and incorporate a design that is appropriate to its context. In this case, the new terrace would lack unity or cohesion given that the front elevations of the individual dwellings would not follow an obvious pattern or rhythm in their scale, proportions or design.
 11. On the first main issue, I conclude that the proposed development would cause significant harm to the character and appearance of the local area. As such, it conflicts with Policies 7 and 26 of the Havering Local Plan 2016-2031 (LP) and the

advice within the Council's Supplementary Planning Document, *Residential Extensions and Alterations* (SPD). Together, these policies and guidance promote high quality design and support development that respects or complements the distinctive qualities and character of the local area. It is also at odds with the policies of the Framework 2024, which state that developments should add to the overall quality of the area and be sympathetic to local character.

Living conditions

12. Although the garden serving No 1 would be smaller with the new built form in place, it would remain a good size to serve the occupiers of this property. From this vantage point, the rear of the new terrace would be evident with the 2-storey rear projections of new House Nos 1 and 2 in proximity. Nevertheless, sufficient space would be retained within the back garden of No 1 to ensure that the proposal would not be so imposing as to overbear on the occupiers of this property.
13. Reference is made to the properties just beyond one side of the site, of which it is the occupiers of 1 Toby Way that are closest and so most likely to be affected by the proposal. The enlarged dwelling would not extend significantly beyond the front or rear of this neighbouring property. Consequently, the main direction of outlook would be largely unaffected by the appeal scheme. The new terrace would be evident from the forecourt and back garden of 1 Toby Way and along the access road that serves this and other properties. From these vantage points, the existing fence which marks the boundary of the site would screen views of the lower flank wall of the proposal. The upper part of the terrace would be mainly seen from some distance and at an oblique angle. To my mind, the new built form, while visible, would not feel oppressive when seen from 1 Toby Way and its access road.
14. On the second main issue, I therefore conclude that the living conditions of future and existing occupiers would not be materially harmed. As such, there is no conflict with LP Policy 7 or the Council's SPD insofar as they aim to safeguard residential amenity.

Highway safety

15. A total of 5 parking spaces would serve the proposed terrace. Based on the appellant's swept path drawings, a driver of a typical medium sized car would be able to enter and exit the site in forward gear and use each of these parking spaces. On that basis, I am unable to share the concerns of the Council and others that the proposal would pose a safety hazard to other users of Essex Close.
16. On the third main issue, I conclude that the proposal would not be detrimental to highway safety. As such, it does not conflict with LP Policies 23 and 24 or Policy T4 of The London Plan. Together, these policies aim to ensure that development meets the parking needs of the site, avoids adverse impacts on the transport network, and does not increase road danger.

Other matters

17. The Council is unable to demonstrate a 5-year supply of housing. In those circumstances, the Framework 2024 states that planning 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. Regard should be paid to key policies of directing

development to sustainable locations, making effective use of land, securing well designed places and providing affordable homes.

18. There would be benefits from the construction of 2 additional homes towards the Council's supply of deliverable housing sites and the Government's objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes. The appeal scheme would contribute to the choice of accommodation available to future occupiers although in a limited way given the modest scale of development. It would also make efficient use of the land available within a site in the urban area, wherein the principle of housing is acceptable. Economic benefits would also follow from the sale of construction materials and from the spending of future occupiers.

Planning Balance

19. Weight is attributable to the provision of new homes generally, and particularly in the absence of a 5-year supply of deliverable housing sites. However, the scale of the development is modest and so the benefits from this and the economic benefits only attract moderate weight. The proposal would not cause significant harm to the living conditions of future and existing occupiers nor prejudice highway safety. As these considerations are neither in support nor against the proposal, they are neutral in weight. However, I have found that the proposed development would cause serious harm to the character and appearance of the local area. It therefore conflicts with several development plan policies and those of the Framework 2024. As such, I attach significant weight to the conflict with these policies.
20. Overall, the adverse impacts would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits. Therefore, the proposal would not constitute a sustainable form of development in terms of the Framework 2024.

Conclusion

21. The proposed development would conflict with the development plan. There are no material considerations, including those of the Framework 2024, which indicate that the decision should be taken otherwise than in accordance with the development plan. For the reasons set out above, and having regard to all other matters raised, I therefore conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Gary Deane

INSPECTOR