



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 16 March 2024

by J Somers BSocSci (Planning) MA (HEC) MRTPI IHBC

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 09 April 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/K2230/D/23/3334531

Stirling Villa, Whitepost Lane, Culverstone DA13 0TN

- 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 Gavin against the decision of Gravesham Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 20230812, dated 28 July 2023, was refused by notice dated 13 September 2023.
 - The development proposed is described as 'Proposed First Floor Extension & Alterations.'
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matter

2. I note that both parties in their appeal documents reference the paragraphs of the National Planning Policy Framework 2021 (the Framework). Since the submission of the appeal, the 2021 version of the Framework has been superseded by the 2023 version. The wording of the paragraphs of the new Framework relevant to this appeal remain unchanged from the 2021 version (except for new paragraph numbers) and therefore did not require to be reassessed by either party in relation to this appeal. I have considered the appeal on this basis and refer only to the updated 2023 Framework within my decision.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development upon the existing building and the character and appearance of the locality.

Reasons

4. The appeal site is located along Whitepost Lane, a single carriageway that is adjoined on either side by residential development. Along Whitepost Lane the dwellings are generally detached, and consist of chalet type bungalows (some with accommodation within the roof space) which appear to date in phases with earlier dwellings of the early twentieth century towards Wrotham Road, with a number of mid twentieth century dwellings along Whitepost Lane and some later twentieth century and infill dwellings evident further along Whitepost Lane. Despite the different phases of development dwellings and later infill; dwellings along the street tend to have small front gardens, hipped or gable roof forms with materials predominantly consisting of brick, render, hanging tiles and concrete and clay tile roof coverings. There is a low scale nature with an emphasis on vegetation and spaciousness with visual gaps and spaces in

- between and around dwellings where glimpses to the tops of trees in rear gardens and well vegetated front gardens can be experienced. Together with the large proportion of boundary hedging and street trees, these elements present a leafy and spacious feeling and is a positive characteristic that contributes to the local distinctive character and appearance of the area.
5. The appeal site is an infill development which appears to date from the late twentieth century, is single storey and is quite large in terms of footprint with one section of the dwelling extending north-south, with a forward projection extending to the east and an L-shaped projection extending west. The dwelling is unusual given that it has a greater setback within the street scene from the adjoining dwellings which is due to the presence of a 'band hut.' This small single storey building has a rectangular footprint and lies to the front of the appeal site with a large amount of vegetation surrounding which may indicate that the building has not been used for some time. Despite the presence of the Band Hut, the dwelling is visible within the public realm which is mainly due to the neighbouring apartment building to the north being setback allowing views into the site and also from a pedestrian footpath which runs along the northern boundary of the site. It is as a result of this, the low scale nature and the importance of gaps and vegetation in and around the dwelling that the dwelling still contributes towards the character and appearance of the street scene. As such I disagree with comments in the Appellant's Statement of Case (SoC) that the appeal site bares 'little or no resemblance to the prevailing pattern of development.'
 6. In undertaking development, the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (CS) Policy CS19 outlines a number of design principles to adhere to, such as the development responding to the character of the site and the surrounding area, and a consideration of elements such as materials, height, building line, siting, layout, and design features, amongst others. The Council has also published a Householder Alterations/ Extension Guide Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) which gives further guidance to the appropriateness of extending dwellings. In particular, key principles promoted by the SPD seek to ensure extensions respect the character of the original dwelling, complement and correspond to the character of the neighbourhood. Additionally, Paragraph 135 of the Framework follows on from this local policy and seeks that decisions ensure that developments are sympathetic of local character and the surrounding built development, amongst others.
 7. The proposal would add an additional level above the north-south section and front protruding section to the east, with the combination of half hipped, pitched and gable roof forms with dormer windows, roof lights and dovecot with much of the roof tiled to the eaves of the single storey. The proposed extension in terms of the massing, proportions and clutter would appear as a very awkward juxtaposition to the existing dwelling. Whilst matching materials would be utilised, the resulting architectural approach would overcomplicate the design of the existing dwelling, examples being the offset dormer windows and clutter caused by additional architectural features such as a dovecot which serves no purpose and the combination of different roof forms and how these relate to the existing roof. The use of tiling to the eaves of the dwelling gives a very top-heavy appearance with the proposed scheme not blending in seamlessly into the design or character of the existing building. In this particular case the proposed extension would detract from the positive

attributes which contribute to the character and local distinctiveness of the area.

8. I appreciate explanations as to the design approach from the Appellant's Statement of Case (SoC) which looks to address a number of elements that have been discussed with the Council in pre-application discussions¹. However, when assessing this particular proposal, the overall bulk, massing and architectural approach of the proposal is problematic.
9. I note the number of planning decisions that have been submitted to illustrate that other nearby dwellings² have extended their dwellings in terms of roof alterations and illustrations of height. Each of these examples illustrate additions and alterations such as dormer windows and alterations which match the characteristics of the existing dwelling. I can appreciate the concerns of the Appellant particularly having undertaken a number of pre-application responses with the Council. In my reading of the Council Officer's Report and the pre-application responses, it is not the principle of extending upwards which is the issue, but how compatible the extension is to the existing dwelling and how this impacts upon the character and appearance of the area. Taking the above into account, the submitted planning approvals do not demonstrate precedence and carry limited weight in demonstrating the appropriateness of the appeal scheme.
10. I also acknowledge and appreciate the comments from the Appellant in their personal statement which accompanies the SoC regarding their personal needs, their specific situation and justifications for the proposed extension which I have treated as a material consideration to this proposal. Having reviewed these personal circumstances, I feel that there may be other ways of accommodating the Appellant's needs which may be more compliant with the policies of the development plan. As such the personal circumstances of the Appellant in this case do not indicate that the decision should not be made in accordance with the policies of the development plan.
11. In conclusion of this matter, the proposed extension would result in the loss of positive characteristics and would be clearly disproportionate and the additional visual bulk and massing would be unlike other dwellings constructed within the immediate vicinity. Consequently, the proposal would be harmful to the character and appearance and local distinctiveness of the locality and be contrary to CS Policy CS19 and Paragraph 135 of the Framework, as described previously.

Conclusion

12. For the reasons given above, I conclude that the appeal is dismissed.

J Somers
INSPECTOR

¹ Council Ref No: PRE20220243, PRE20220305, PRE20230019

² Labelled as: Site A: Kingsley House, Whitepost Lane; Site B: Woodlands, Whitepost Lane; Site C: Walding Field, Whitepost Lane; Site D Whitepost Lane; Site E – Woodville, Whitepost Lane