
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 31 October 2024

by C Hall BSc MPhil MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 12 November 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/K2230/D/24/3351118

24 Thong Lane, Gravesend, Kent DA12 4LD

- 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 Thomas Sandow against the decision of Gravesend Borough Council.
 - The application reference is 20231164.
 - The proposed development is for construction of a dropped kerb and vehicle crossover.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are the impact of the development on a) the character and appearance of the host dwelling and local area; b) highway safety; and c) biodiversity.

Reasons

Character and appearance

3. The appeal site relates to a two-storey, semi-detached dwelling on Thong Lane, in a street scene of other domestic properties of broadly similar scale and design.
 4. The works would essentially comprise two elements; the removal of part of the grass verge to the front of the site to provide access from the highway across the public footway; and the hardscaping of the front garden for the parking of vehicles.
 5. At my visit I observed that there are numerous crossovers serving frontage parking areas to dwellings in the street scene. Although there are comparatively fewer on the side of Thong Lane of which the appeal site forms a part, they are nevertheless established features of the neighbourhood. In this context, whilst the removal of the grass verge is unfortunate, I find that it would not be so detrimental as to warrant a refusal of permission on this ground. Furthermore, I note that the scheme would not require the loss of any of the local street trees, which contribute positively to the vicinity.
 6. Turning to the hardscaping of the front garden, due to the myriad other examples in the area I am satisfied that parking could be achieved in principle. However, the layout plan demonstrates that no space would be made available for vegetation to soften the appearance of the proposals.
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7. Although many other existing frontages are similarly bereft of planting, I am of the view that this should not be encouraged as cumulatively such urbanisation detracts from the street scene. In the absence of any indication of borders for shrubs or hedges to establish and mature, I consider that the scheme would represent a harsh and intrusive form of development.
8. Consequently, there would be harm to the character and appearance of the host dwelling and local area, in contravention of Policy CS19 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy 2014 (CS), which seeks to secure proposals of acceptable scale and appearance. The scheme would also be inconsistent with the advice in the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework), which states that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development.

Highway safety

9. The appeal site lies on a stretch of Thong Lane where the topography falls in a broadly north-easterly direction. The Council states that the scheme could have a deleterious impact on highway safety as it could result in vehicles slipping during icy conditions.
10. I have not been provided with any tangible evidence of the proposed gradients involved, for example in the form of plans showing sections across the land from the highway into the appeal site. As such, taking a precautionary approach to this issue, I cannot be certain that the works would be provided for safe entering and exiting manoeuvres, which could endanger other drivers and pedestrians.
11. The development would therefore be harmful to highway safety, contrary to Policy CS11 of the CS, Policy T5 of the Local Plan First Review (1994) and the Householder Extensions/Alterations Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document 2021. It would also be inconsistent with the Framework, which advocates that development should not have an unacceptable impact on highway safety.

Biodiversity

12. The appeal proposal would result in the loss of a small swathe of grass verge and part of the front garden currently laid as lawn. To my mind, their ecological potential would be relatively limited given their minimal extent.
13. For this reason, I conclude that the development would not be materially harmful to biodiversity. The proposal would therefore not substantially conflict with Policy CS12 of the Gravesham Core Strategy 2014 and the provision of the Framework that seek, amongst other matters, to protect green infrastructure.

Conclusion

14. Having regard to the above and all other issues presented, the appeal fails.

C Hall

INSPECTOR