



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/24/3351826

27 Hillingdon Road, Gravesend, Kent DA11 7LQ

- 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 Daniel Martin against the decision of Gravesend Borough Council.
 - The application reference is 20240041.
 - The proposed development is for converting the front garden to driveway.
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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; and b) highway safety.

Reasons

Character and appearance

3. The appeal site is a two-storey, mid-terrace dwelling on the south side of Hillingdon Road. The house is in an elevated position due to a slight fall in topography towards the public highway. The front garden is mainly laid to block paving with a low-level supporting wall at the boundary with the footway.
 4. It was apparent from my site visit that many dwellings have off-street parking at the front on hardscaped driveways. With this in mind, I am satisfied that the provision of the crossover and parking area could be acceptable in principle in this location. The Council has pointed to an appeal decision at 23 Hillingdon Road (Inspectorate reference APP/K2230/D/20/3249712), however this scheme was dismissed as it would have resulted in the loss of a street tree and a larger amount of vegetation than the appeal proposals before me. Furthermore, supporting walls increase in height towards the far western end of Hillingdon Road reflecting the downward slope of the highway, and as such the extent of engineering works would likely be more substantial, increasing the possibility of harm in character terms.
 5. Notwithstanding the above, the plans as submitted are somewhat lacking in detail, and as a result I share the Council's concerns that the scheme would give rise to a harsh form of development that could cause harm to the visual amenity of the streetscene. Although many other existing frontages are similarly devoid of planting, I am of the view that this should not be encouraged as cumulatively such urbanisation detracts from the street scene.
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6. The appellant has indicated on an overhead image that more soft landscaping features could be added to the driveway. However, it is not clear whether these would be at ground level or incorporated into larger supporting walls, and as such I cannot form an impression of the general appearance of the development.
7. Consequently, there would be harm to the character and appearance of the host dwelling and local area, contrary to 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

8. The Council has indicated that the proposed hard standing would have a gradient of 16%, whereas the Kent Design Guide states that for single car driveways the gradient should not exceed 10%. Therefore the Authority considers the gradient a safety issue, which could also result in damage to vehicles and to the footway.
9. The appellant states that he will look to ensure the gradient is in line with the guidance. Nevertheless, I have not been presented with a plan showing any amended 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. There may be other driveways locally with gradients that also exceed the guidance, but these do not justify further development that could prejudice highway conditions. The letter from the County Council to the previous owner is not a planning permission, so does not grant approval in this respect.
10. I conclude on this matter that the development would be harmful to highway safety, failing Policy P3 of the Council's Local Plan First Review (1994) and the Kent Design Guide.

Conclusion

11. In regard to the above and every other issue advanced, I dismiss the appeal.

C Hall

INSPECTOR