



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 24 June 2025

by **H Lock BA(Hons) DipTP MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 08 July 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/K2230/D/25/3366310

131 Central Avenue, Gravesend, Kent, DA12 5BH

- 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 Peter Bleakley against the decision of Gravesham Borough Council.
 - The application Ref is 20250068.
 - The development proposed is raising of ridge height and construction of first floor side and rear extension, together with 1no. dormer on side/rear roof slope with roof lights and 2no. rooflights on southern elevation, to facilitate the conversion of the loft into habitable space.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matter

2. The description of development above has been taken from the Council's decision notice and the appellant's appeal form. Whilst normally this would be taken from the planning application form, the above more accurately reflects the extent of the proposal than as described on that form.

Main Issues

3. The main issues are the effect of the proposal on (1) the character and appearance of the appeal property and the surrounding area; (2) the living conditions of occupants of proposed bedrooms 1 and 3; and (3) the living conditions of occupants of neighbouring properties, with particular reference to privacy.

Reasons

Character and Appearance

4. The appeal property is a semi-detached bungalow in an area of mostly two-storey houses. The semi-detached pair have been altered but retain the distinctive central roof ridge line and 'H'-shaped form, with lower wings to the front and rear. Both have single-storey rear extensions which differ in design and height.
5. Policy CS19 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy 2014 (LPCS) seeks to ensure that new development is visually attractive, will conserve and enhance the character of the local built environment, and integrate well with the local area. In this context, the proposal would preserve the front elevation and maintain the symmetry of the semi-detached pair, but the increased height and depth of the rear wing would be visible in the street scene across the gap between the appeal

property and 133 Central Avenue. In addition, due to the proposed depth and height, I consider it likely that the enlarged rear gable and deep flat-roofed rear dormer would be perceived in views from the north-west due to the lower rear wing of the attached property (No.129). As such, the development would be apparent, if not dominant, in the street scene.

6. In support of its policies, the Council has published guidance in its 'Householder Extensions/Alterations Design Guide' 2021 Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). Amongst other criteria, section 9 of that document advises that proposals should reflect and respect the original character of the existing dwelling, and should be subordinate to the host property, allowing the original building to remain dominant. Section 10 advises that rear roof extensions should be set away from the gables, hips, eaves and ridge of a property, and dormers should not overwhelm the roof slope within which they are to be placed.
7. In contrast to this advice, and LPCS Policy CS19, the proposal would materially increase the bulk and massing of the building at roof level in a form that would not appear to be typical in the area. I note that the design is intended to respect the character and proportions of the dwelling, and to combine rear extensions under a single, more cohesive gable end. However, the resultant scale and bulk of this extended gable and dormer window would not be subordinate to the dwelling, with the dormer occupying, and overwhelming, much of its associated roof slope.
8. I appreciate that the visual impact on Central Avenue may be reasonably limited, but there are many properties from which the development would be seen, such as in Ridgeway Avenue. I do not share the view that the proposal will not look radically different from the existing situation, as the proposed area of flat roof will be more apparent than the existing due to its higher level, and the larger gable will appear at odds with that of No.129.
9. The appellant advises that the council did not take sufficient account of the changes between a previously refused scheme and the appeal proposal; the reason for refusal appears to refer to 2no.side dormers in error, as the delegated report makes clear that a single side dormer was proposed. Nevertheless, whilst there were material changes between the two schemes, for the reasons outlined above I do not consider that they have resulted in a development for which planning permission should be granted.
10. I have had regard to the design mix in the local area and note the examples of roof extensions and dormer windows identified by the appellant. However, in the absence of full details, I do not know if these obtained or required express planning permission, or the planning policies in place at the time that they were assessed. I do not consider the design specifics of the dwelling known as No.86 to be comparable to those of the appeal scheme. As such, these examples offer limited support to the appeal.
11. The appellant advises that, were the appeal to fail, an alternative scheme will be built as Permitted Development (PD) by virtue of Class B, Part 1, Schedule 2 of the General Permitted Development Order 2015 (as amended); and that this would be more harmful in visual amenity terms than the appeal proposal. Plans of a PD scheme were supplied as part of the appeal, although I have not been supplied with any Certificate of Lawfulness. Reference is also made to adding a side-facing dormer window, but this does not form part of the suggested PD scheme supplied.

12. The PD proposal includes a hip-to-gable extension and large flat roofed rear dormer window that would inevitably affect the symmetry of the semi-detached pair of which this forms part. However, the appeal proposal would not be neutral in its visual impact on the pair, as the material difference in rear roof height and massing between the two would be apparent. The overall scale and bulk of the PD development would be markedly less than proposed in this appeal, and less incongruous in its design. As such, I do not consider the 'fallback' to be less desirable than the appeal scheme. I have had regard to the cited appeal for a single storey rear extension and rear dormer in Barnet¹, but as the fallback in that case appears to have related to a 2-phase development, subject of a Certificate of Lawfulness, which would have "likely lead to a similar outcome" as that appeal scheme, I do not find it to be comparable.
13. Whilst I am mindful of the benefits to the appellant and his family by providing the additional accommodation, this would not outweigh the compromise to the appearance of the dwelling. I therefore conclude that the proposal would detract from the character and appearance of the appeal property and the surrounding area, in conflict with LPCS Policy CS19.

Living Conditions of Occupants

14. LPCS Policy CS19 requires new development to be fit for purpose and to safeguard the amenity of its occupants; and requiring compliance with adopted Residential Layout Guidelines (SPG2 - Supplementary Planning Guidance 2, as amended 2020). The introduction (page 4) to that document confirms that the SPG2 guidelines apply to extensions to existing dwellings, although I note the appellant's view that the national technical housing standards apply to new dwellings only.
15. The submitted first-floor plan gives a dimension of 5.70m² for Proposed Bedroom 3, much of which would have a head height below 1500mm. For such a small room, this shortfall would be materially below the standard for a single bedroom set out in the Council's space standards. Regardless of the standard applied, there would be restricted head height for much of the floorspace, and this would not be a functional room to provide appropriate living standards for its occupants. Its creation would not be justified by improved space at ground floor. Whilst I note the appellant's intention that it be a flexible room for occasional guest accommodation, office space or storage, by design it should be a usable space to meet the needs of current and future residents of the property.
16. The existing ground floor bedrooms are stated as being single rooms only. However, according to the dimensions on the submitted plans, they are both larger in floorspace than proposed first-floor bedrooms 1 and 3. The provision of a first-floor bathroom would not appear to be dependent on the proposed layout.
17. As habitable rooms, Bedrooms 1 and 3 would have access to natural light and ventilation via rooflights, and I note the appellant's view that a fallback PD scheme could include rooflights. Bedrooms are not used solely for sleeping, but for activities such as playing, relaxing and studying, and the proposed rooflights would offer a reasonably limited outlook from these rooms. However, the lower sill height of the rooflights shown on the submitted floor plan would not be so high as to prevent

¹ Appeal refs. APP/N5090/C/23/3333385, -/3331923 & -/3336558 - 3 Kingsmead, Barnet, EN5 5AX

views out, and would be no more restricted than the current bedrooms which face onto a side passageway. As such, the rooflights would accord with the requirement in the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) to create places which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users.

18. I therefore conclude that, whilst outlook would be maintained, the size of proposed Bedroom 3 would provide inadequate living conditions for current and future occupiers of the property, contrary to the requirement in LPCS Policy CS19 to safeguard the amenity of occupants, and the Framework.

Living Conditions of Neighbouring Residents

19. The proposal would introduce a new first-floor rear facing window. The new window would be set away from both side boundaries, and any views over the rear gardens of the properties either side would be oblique. Although the appeal property does not currently have first-floor views, there are numerous two-storey properties in the vicinity, such that privacy of gardens is already affected to some degree by the potential for overlooking.
20. I therefore conclude that the proposal would not introduce an unacceptable level of overlooking of neighbouring gardens to a degree that living conditions would be harmed. The privacy of occupants of neighbouring properties and land would be safeguarded, in accordance with LPCS Policy CS19 and the Framework.

Conclusion

21. For the reasons given above the appeal should be dismissed.

H Lock

INSPECTOR