



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 11 January 2024

by Mr Kim Bennett BSc DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 29.01.2024

Appeal Ref: APP/K2230/D/23/3329823

1 Willow Walk, Meopham, Gravesend, Kent DA13 0QS

- 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 Palvinder Phiora against the decision of Gravesend Borough Council.
 - The application ref 20230558, dated 1 June 2023, was refused by notice dated
 - 14 July 2023.
 - The development proposed is the demolition of existing detached garage and rear projection, erection of first floor extension to bungalow, single storey rear extension and side extensions incorporating garage to either side and alterations to fenestration.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matter

2. The Council referred to conflict with paragraph 130 of the National Planning Policy Framework in its decision notice. That version of the Framework has since been updated by a new version being issued in December 2023. However, the contents of paragraph 135 of the new version are the same as paragraph 130 of the old version. The policy approach in that respect therefore has not changed and I have referred to the new paragraph numbering accordingly.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the development on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

4. The appeal property comprises a large detached bungalow set forward on the corner of the junction of Willow Walk with South Street (A227) and occupies a prominent position in the streetscene. Properties along both sides of Willow Walk are mainly bungalows and therefore of modest scale, although in some cases there are dormer windows providing roof accommodation. Along the east side of South Street, the character is again mainly that of bungalows or chalet bungalows with the occasional two storey property. That includes the adjacent property to the north, known as Marycroft, although it has a cat slide roof so that it is only single storey at its southern end adjoining the site.

5. On the western side of South Street there is a more rural feel with fields and a looser scatter of buildings, whilst beyond the junction but set well back from the road, is a primary school and nursery.
6. A previous proposal was refused permission in November 2022¹ for a larger scheme than now proposed, for the same reason as the currently proposed development. Following that there were pre application discussions in February 2023 on a reduced scheme which culminated in the current proposal. Whilst I note that the Council acknowledged the proposed design alterations which sought to reduce the scale and massing of the proposal, it remained concerned about the overall visual impact of the extensions being proposed and made further design suggestions to address those concerns.
7. The appellant considers that the streetscene is varied in character and design and that the proposed extensions would provide a better proportioned and balanced appearance than that which currently exists. It is also pointed out that there are other examples of two storey properties in the vicinity, including the adjacent property known as Marycroft. In that respect, the ridge line of the proposed extensions would be the same.
8. Whilst I have carefully considered the appellant's comments, in my view and as noted above, the prevailing character of the immediate area is bungalows or chalet bungalows. Where there are two storey properties, they are set well back from the road frontage. In contrast, the appeal property is very prominent in the streetscene by virtue of its corner location and the fact that it is set well forward of Marycroft. That prominence is accentuated by its unusual plan form, being very wide across the frontage but with limited depth. I acknowledge that the proposed plan form width would be reduced slightly, but it would remain prominent because of its corner location.
9. As a consequence of the above, the proposed extensions with the two large gable elements at either end and large roof form, would appear over dominant in the streetscene, particularly when approaching from the south along South Street, or indeed along Willow Walk itself. Because of it being set forward of Marycroft, the northern elevation would also be prominent when approaching from the north. Whilst the ridge height might be similar to that of Marycroft, it would only be at the latter's northern part because of the catslide roof, and the bulk and massing of the proposed extensions would be far greater. I do not accept therefore, the appellant's view that the character of the immediate area would be maintained.
10. For a combination of the above reasons, I agree with the Council that the proposed development by virtue of its bulk and massing across a wide plan form and on a prominent corner, would appear over dominant and out of character in the local streetscene to an extent which would cause visual harm. In reaching that view, I also note that the Council accepts that some form of two storey accommodation may be possible on the site. I would agree with that in principle although any revised scheme would need to be the subject of further discussions between the parties to establish key design principles in respect of bulk, massing and footprint, in order to result in a scheme which better integrates with its surroundings.

¹ Application reference 20221122

11. I note that the Council raises no objections in terms of impact on living conditions of occupiers of adjoining properties, parking provision or adverse impact on the open character of the surrounding area. I see no reason to come to any different view on those matters.
12. Having regard to the above, the proposed development would conflict with policy CS19 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy 2014 and paragraph 135 of the National Planning Policy Framework, in that it would not conserve and enhance or be sympathetic to, the character of the local built environment, would not integrate well with the surrounding local area and would not add to the overall quality of the area as a result.
13. Accordingly, the appeal should be dismissed.

Kim Bennett

INSPECTOR