



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 9 November 2020

by Grahame Gould BA MPhil MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 24th November 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/K2230/D/20/3252699
135 Astra Drive, Gravesend DA12 4QF

- 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 A Khayer against the decision of Gravesham Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 20200137, dated 8 February 2020, was refused by notice dated 24 April 2020.
 - The development proposed is erection of first floor side and front extensions.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the development on the character and appearance of 135 Astra Drive (No 135) and the surrounding area.

Reasons

3. No 135 is a two storey, semi-detached house and Astra Drive is largely characterised by semi-detached houses, although there are some short terraces at the eastern extremity of this street. The development would involve the erection of a first floor front and side extension (the proposed extension/addition) above No 135's single storey front and side extension.
4. While the proposed extension would be of comparatively modest proportions, it would nevertheless occupy a prominent position, wrapping itself around No 135's front corner at first floor level. I consider that wrapping around arrangement would result in the proposed extension having an inharmonious relationship with the existing house. That is because of the narrowness of the first floor side element of the proposed extension, at 1.3 metres, and the 0.48 metre¹ setting down of the ridge line of this part of the addition relative to No 135's main roof ridge.
5. I appreciate that the setting down of the roof ridge is intended to make the side element of the proposed extension appear subservient to the existing house. However, the setting down of the roof ridge would be very limited and I consider that when that is taken with the narrowness of this part of the proposed extension that would contribute to the whole of the addition having a contrived design that would be harmful to No 135's appearance.

¹ Paragraph 7.15 of the appellant's appeal statement

6. Astra Drive is a street of over 100 dwellings, many of which have porches and other single storey front extensions. I also saw that seventeen of the dwellings in this street have two storey front extensions of different depths and widths, with some of those extensions having been combined with side additions. Given the differing depths of the two storey front extensions and/or the front gardens of the host properties, the front elevations of the additions are set back at varying distances from the front boundaries of the properties in question. That in turn affects the degree of prominence of the two storey front additions in Astra Drive's streetscene. So, for example, the degree of prominence for the two storey front extensions at Nos 35 and 39 is different to that of the addition at No 54.
7. The two storey front and side additions appeared to be of varying ages, with the planning history for some of them being explained in section 7 of the appellant's appeal statement, including the two storey front extension allowed on appeal in 2008 at No 54. Dwellings with two storey front extensions in Astra Drive are in the minority and within the section of this street to the west of Michael Gardens, which includes No 135, there are no such additions. As I have indicated above, I consider that the proposed extension would occupy a prominent siting and with a first floor forward projection of 2.55 metres², I consider that this addition would have a detrimental appearance within Astra Drive's streetscene.
8. I recognise that my views on the harmful nature of the appearance of the proposed extension within the streetscene differ from the conclusion the Inspector who determined the appeal concerning No 54 arrived at and how the Council has looked upon extensions concerning some of the other properties in Astra Drive. However, as the appellant has acknowledged, each case should be determined on its own merits, which is what I have done. Notably in recent times planning policy has placed greater emphasis on considering the design quality for new development. In that regard the local and national policy context now is not directly comparable with that which prevailed when the appeal concerning No 54 was determined. While a two storey front extension, permitted by the Council in 2019, is currently being constructed at No 77, the design of that addition is not directly comparable with what is proposed at No 135, because in the case of the former there would be no side element³.
9. I do not share the appellant's view that the proposed extension would be '... a high quality residential scheme ...'⁴. I therefore conclude that the development would have an unacceptable effect on the character and appearance of No 135 and the surrounding area. I consider that the development would be contrary to Policy CS19 of the Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy of 2014 and the provisions of section 12 'Achieving well-designed places' of the National Planning Policy Framework of 2019. That is because the development would not be visually attractive or make a positive contribution to the streetscene, nor would it add to the overall quality of the area. Given the conflict with both national and local planning policy I consider that the proposed extension would not amount to sustainable development.

² Paragraph 7.14 of the appellant's appeal statement

³ Appendices E and F to the appellant's appeal statement

⁴ Paragraph 7.6 of the appellant's appeal statement

Other matters

10. While the proposed development would provide additional accommodation for the occupiers of No 135, I consider that benefit of the development would not outweigh the harm that I have identified.
11. I am content that the siting of the proposed extension relative to the houses on either side of and opposite No 135 would be such that the presence of this addition would have no adverse effect on the living conditions for the occupiers of those dwellings. Notwithstanding that and the absence of any objections to the proposed extension from the occupiers of the neighbouring properties, I consider that those matters do not provide a justification for permitting a development that I have found would have an unacceptable effect on the character and appearance of No 135 and the surrounding area.

Conclusion

12. I conclude that this appeal should be dismissed.

Grahame Gould

INSPECTOR