Appeal Decision
Site visit made on 16 April 2018

by Clive Tokley MRTPI
an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State
Decision date: 20 April 2018

Appeal Ref: APP/Z5060/D/18/3193205
36 Stratton Drive, Barking, IG11 9HJ.

- 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 Sultan Ahmed and Ms Aneesa Hoque against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham.
- The application ref 17/01414/FUL, dated 17 August 2017, was refused by notice dated 13 October 2017.
- The development proposed is described as a second storey side extension (with 0.5m setback at front elevation and 0.5m full length setback from side boundary) and part double, part single storey rear extension.

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The Council has raised no objection to the effect of the proposal on the living conditions of neighbouring occupiers and from what I have read and seen I have no reason to take a different view. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area with particular reference to the closure of the gap between the terraces.

Reasons

3. Stratton Drive and the nearby streets are mainly fronted by short terraces of two-storey houses. The Stratton Drive houses have full-height front bay windows with gabled and hipped projecting roofs which create a visual rhythm in the street scene. In the vicinity of the appeal property I saw that many of the gaps that would originally have occurred between the terraces have been reduced in width or closed completely by two-storey side extensions. However I noted that a number remain.

4. No 36 Stratton Drive is an end-terrace house. The space between it and No 38 is filled at ground level by two low-roofed lean-to garages; however a gap of about 5m remains at first floor level and provides a clear break between the terraces. The terraces on each side of the gap have largely retained their original character at first floor level and above. The space between the appeal property and No 38, together with the other remaining gaps, provide some visual relief from the continuously built-up frontages that have been created in some parts of the street.
5. The Council's adopted *Residential Extensions and Alterations* Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) indicates an underlying key principle that extensions should be designed to reflect the positive elements of the character of the area in which they are located and that extensions which undermine the character of the area by not respecting its positive characteristics will not normally be acceptable. As regards side extensions to terraced houses it indicates that where gaps between buildings contribute positively to the character of the area it will be expected that the first floor of side extensions are set off the boundary of the site.

6. The first floor flank wall of the proposal would be inset from the boundary by 0.5m; nevertheless even with this off-set the proposal would significantly diminish the space between the appeal property and No 38 at first floor level. I consider that the space between the houses makes a positive contribution to the character of the area and the reduction in width of the gap that would result from the proposal would unacceptably detract from the character and appearance of the area.

7. The appellant draws attention to a May 2017 appeal (ref APP/Z5060/D/17/3171988) which included a full-width side extension. In dismissing that appeal the Inspector concluded that the proposal would "close the break in development that defines the character of the estate as that of short terraces separated by small gaps. This would remove an attractive feature of the area, harming its character and appearance". The current proposal would be narrower than the previous appeal proposal but, in my view, the 0.5m reduction in width now proposed would not materially change its effect on the character and appearance of the area. The appellant points out that the first-floor front wall is set back from the line of the terrace; however this set back and the small reduction in roof height do not overcome my concern about the closure of the gap.

8. The proposal would conflict with the objectives of the SPD guidance and with Policy BP8 of the adopted *Borough Wide Development Policies Development Plan Document* (DPD) which indicates that developments should have regard to the local character of the area and DPD Policy BP11 which seeks to ensure that the character and amenity of the area is protected or enhanced.

**Conclusion**

9. I have noted that there are many examples of extensions that have closed or partially closed the gaps between the terraces that would originally have occurred throughout this residential area. However those that remain make an important positive contribution to the character and appearance of the area. By insetting the flank wall and setting back the front wall the appellant has sought to reduce the bulk of the proposal when seen from the road and maintain a wider gap than would have resulted from the previous proposal. Nevertheless I have concluded that the proposal would unacceptably detract from the character and appearance of the area and that the appeal should not succeed.

*Clive Tokley*

INSPECTOR