



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 22 January 2019

by Graeme Robbie BA(Hons) BPI MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 7 February 2019

Appeal Ref: APP/H0738/D/18/3215978

43 Hillcrest Avenue, Cleveland, Stockton on Tees TS18 5AF

- 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 Michael Taouxis against the decision of Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 18/0922/FUL, dated 24 April 2018, was refused by notice dated 23 August 2018.
 - The development proposed was initially described as '*Resubmission of previous approval 17/2183/FUL extension with roof alterations and additions amended application*'.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the host property and the surrounding area.

Reasons

3. No. 43, a modestly sized semi-detached dwelling, is set within a large garden plot at the head of the Hillcrest Avenue cul-de-sac. It is typical of the prevailing form of development within Hillcrest Avenue; semi-detached, two storey bay, hipped roof, but is set apart by its location and setting within its garden plot.
4. Hillcrest Avenue is, for the majority of its length, a straight residential street with properties presenting a consistent frontage with distinct rhythm from the repetition of the front bays. It turns sharply, however, towards the appeal site, so that No. 43 only becomes evident in shorter views towards the head of the cul-de-sac. Views towards the side and rear elevations of the property are also possible from the elevated path and cycleway to the rear of the site, albeit filtered by vegetation on the embankment sides.
5. The appeal property's neighbour, No. 45, is unusual within the street in that it is a detached property that presents a gabled elevation to the street. The appeal property stands to one side of, and slightly behind, No. 45's façade so that it looks out in part onto the flank elevation of that property. Thus, when turning the corner No.43 presently has a somewhat discrete presence within the streetscene with only oblique views across its frontage that, even from closer views, belie the space around the property.
6. The proposed extension would partially close off the space between Nos. 43 and 45, not because it would be any closer to No. 45 but rather because its

width would restrict the view through the gap between the two. However, because of the view on approach across the building's frontage from Hillcrest Avenue the full extent of the proposed extension's scale and bulk would not be evident. Nor, from this vantage point, would the gable elevation and roofline be particularly obvious or harmful.

7. I accept that the extension would unbalance the pair of semi-detached dwellings when viewed from head-on and at close quarters at the head of the cul-de-sac. However, side extensions to properties along Hillcrest Avenue are not uncommon and, in this respect, I am not persuaded that the proposal would be an overly dominant, obtrusive or incongruous feature when viewed in the context of the Hillcrest Avenue street frontage.
8. However, whilst that may be so, an appreciation of the surrounding streetscene is not limited to that which can be seen from the front on Hillcrest Avenue. The property is also clearly evident from the elevated path and cycleway and so the rear of the appeal property, and those of its neighbours, form part of the surrounding streetscene as experienced from this public vantage point.
9. The proposed extension would wrap around the side and rear of the host property, subsuming much of the existing dwelling. At the rear, the gable peak above the rear extension would span the entire width of the extended rear elevation. As a consequence it would appear uncomfortably wide, imbuing the rear of the property with a somewhat awkward and ungainly appearance and would be a dominant and incongruously disruptive feature at the rear.
10. Although the property's existing flank elevation features a slight step, the proposed side gable elevation would incorporate a larger stepped feature adding additional bulk and contrivance to the gable elevation. Views towards the appeal property are seen through the trees on the embankment sides and the rear of No. 43 is clearly visible. Whilst this might be less so in summer months when the trees are in leaf, glimpsed views to a greater or lesser extent would nonetheless still occur across a considerable length of this path and cycleway.
11. That these elements are not seen or fully appreciated from Hillcrest Avenue itself does not diminish the cumulative harm that the extensions to the side and rear of No. 43 would cause to either the host property, or to the surrounding streetscene. The cumulative scale and proportions of the proposal would result in an incongruous extension, the form, bulk and massing of which would be out of keeping with the modest proportions and character of the host property. Thus, I conclude that the proposal would conflict with Stockton-on-Tees Local Plan (LP) policy HO12, which seeks to ensure that all extensions are in keeping with their surroundings in terms of, amongst other factors, style and proportions, and Core Strategy Development Plan Document (CS) policy CS3(8) which seeks that new developments should contribute and respond positively to the local area.
12. I accept that the appeal property's location within Hillcrest Avenue is not directly comparable with the examples set out in the Council's Supplementary Planning Guidance Note 2: Householder Extension Guide (SPG). However, the SPG recognises that it cannot cover all forms of extensions and circumstances as they will differ from plot to plot. Nonetheless, it recognises that the shape of the roof is an important aspect and that rear extensions do not negate the need for good design.

Other Matters

13. Whilst I was at the appeal site I noted the relationship of the existing property and proposed extension to neighbouring properties at 41 and 45 Hillcrest Avenue, and those adjacent properties on Greens Valley Drive, and particularly with windows on those properties. The Council did not object to the proposal in terms of its effect on the living conditions of occupiers of neighbouring properties and I have not been presented with any further evidence that would lead me to reach a different conclusion. The absence of harm is a neutral factor, however, and does not overcome the harm that I have identified in terms of character and appearance.

Conclusion

14. For the reasons set out above, and having considered all other matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Graeme Robbie

INSPECTOR