The Planning Inspectorate

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 19 September 2016

by John D Allan BA(Hons) BTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government

Decision date: 27 September 2016

Appeal Ref: APP/B5480/D/16/3155900
2a Smart Close, Romford, Havering RM3 7BP

- 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 P Mazzreku against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Havering.
- The application Ref P0027.16, dated 8 January 2016, was refused by notice dated 12 May 2016.
- The development proposed is described as retention of rear loft with rear dormer (proposed dormer to be 40% of roof area).

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matter

2. At the time of my visit I saw that there was an existing rear facing dormer window on the appeal property. This appeared to be broadly constructed in accordance with the details that were shown on the application plan, Drawing No 02, which depicted the existing rear elevation. The description of the proposed development refers to the retention of the rear dormer. I take this to be in an amended form in accordance with the proposed elevation that was shown on the application plan, Drawing No 04. As retention is not an act of development I have treated the appeal as a proposal for a new dormer window to the rear elevation.

Main Issue

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

Reasons

4. The appeal property is a recently constructed, two-storey end terraced dwelling that occupies a corner location with its side, return boundary onto Bell Avenue. The area is entirely residential in character comprising terraced, semi-detached and purpose built blocks of flats, all mostly of a similar age and design, reflective of their time.

5. The Council's *Residential Extensions and Alterations* Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) was adopted 2011, aimed at providing clear design guidance in order to bring forward residential extensions that are sympathetic to an existing property and the street scene. Section 8 of the SPD deals specifically with roof extensions, loft conversions and dormer windows. It advises that dormer windows should normally be located facing the rear garden, the principal reason being so that they are not visible from the street and do not harm the appearance or character of the original house. It also advises that they should be contained well within the body of the roof, by being set well back from the eaves, set well in from the sides including any gables or party walls, and well below the ridge line. It goes on to state that all windows at roof level, particularly dormers, should relate to the windows of the original house in proportion, design and position and that dormers with pitched roofs are preferred.

6. Given the corner location of the appeal property the rear elevation of No 2a, and in particular its roofscape, is highly visible in the street scene along Bell Avenue.

7. The proposal is for a centrally positioned dormer of considerably narrower width compared with the existing dormer. It would be well set in from the sides of the property. However, it would be finished with a flat roof that would be almost as tall as the property's ridge line and would be raised only marginally above the eaves. The window to the front face of the dormer would be of different proportions to those on the main body of the house and would be positioned out of kilter in relation to them. The size and form of the dormer would conflict with the majority of the guidelines within the SPD and my overall impression is that it would appear as a large and dominant feature within the rear roof slope of the dwelling. It would show little respect for the scale and form of the original building and would appear highly visible within the street scene. For these reasons I find that it would detract from the character and appearance of the area.

8. The appellant has directed my attention to a large dormer to the rear of 2 Smart Close and to others more generally in the area. I do not know the planning history relating to No 2, but given this property's more recessed location in relation to Bell Avenue, its rear elevation has a significantly reduced visual presence within the public domain when compared with 2a. Whilst I accept that there are a few other examples locally of large dormer window extensions these are by far within the minority, with most rear roof slopes that are exposed to public views unaltered beyond their original form. Rather than setting any precedent for similar additions elsewhere, these highlight to me the damage that can be done by insensitive additions. In addition, I have no knowledge of any planning history relating to any other specific examples and in this instance I have considered the appeal proposal based upon its own merits and in light of existing guidance and development plan policy.

9. The appellant has suggested that dormer windows of larger scale than that proposed can normally be constructed as permitted development. Be that as it may, the original planning permission for the erection of No 2a specifically withdrew such rights. No such dormer could be built on the appeal property under normally conveyed permitted development rights.

Conclusion

10. For the reasons given, I conclude that the proposal would be harmful to the character and appearance of the area. As such it would conflict with Policy DC61 of the Council's Core Strategy and Development Control Policies DPD, adopted in 2008, which requires development to maintain, enhance or improve the character and appearance of the local area. In this regard there would also be conflict with a core planning principle of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework), which is to always seek to secure high quality design that responds to local character. As such it would fail to perform the environmental role that is required by the Framework in order to achieve sustainable development. Accordingly, and having regard to all other matters raised, including the absence of any objections from any other interested parties to the proposal, the appeal is dismissed.

John D Allan

INSPECTOR