

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 26 September 2016

by Graeme Robbie BA(Hons) BPI MRTPI

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

Decision date: 7th October 2016

Appeal Ref: APP/N5660/W/16/3145991

33A Fieldhouse Road, Lambeth, London SW12 0HL

- 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 Matthew Hull against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Lambeth.
 - The application Ref 15/06393/FUL, dated 5 November 2015, was refused by notice dated 22 December 2015.
 - The development proposed is a rear mansard roof extension.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the host property, and whether the proposal would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Hyde Farm Estate Conservation Area.

Reasons

3. The appeal property is located within the Hyde Farm Estate Conservation Area (the Conservation Area). The Council's Conservation Area Resident's Design Guide (the CARDG) recognises that the area's special character is derived from its architectural coherency and the unified character of its streets. It states that buildings follow a generally consistent pattern, underpinned by the repetition of a range of basic structural forms which, from my site visit, I found to be equally evident at the rear of properties on Fieldhouse Road as they are to the front.
 4. 33A Fieldhouse Road is an upper floor maisonette situated in a mid-terrace property. The CARDG notes that the rear of the houses within the Conservation Area also tend to be of architectural interest, describing them as displaying a characterful, uniform pattern. From observations during my site visit, I find that to be an accurate description. The deep, paired, two storey outriggers located to the rears of properties on this side of Fieldhouse Road have a uniformity about them that not only creates a distinct and clear rhythm along the rear elevation, but which also makes them a key contributing factor to the overall character of the terrace.
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5. The rear roof elevation of No 33A has already been altered by way of the addition of two small dormer windows. From ground level within the rear garden area however, these are barely visible such is the relative height and projection of the rear outrigger. They are, though, modestly sized and sit comfortably within the rear roof elevation. However, the proposal before me would replace these dormer windows with a large mansard roof extension that would extend across the full width and height of the rear roof elevation.
6. The appellant has drawn on the Council's Supplementary Planning Document on Building Alterations & Extensions (the SPD) to find support for both the principle of a mansard roof extension and also for the detailed design thereof. Whilst it is the case that the SPD sets out the Council's support for the principle of "*optimising attic accommodation through the use of roof additions and mansards*", it clearly states that this is within the constraints of achieving subordination of scale and protection of the design integrity of the host building. Moreover, it also clearly sets out (indeed, it does so more than once) a presumption in favour of retaining historic roof forms on heritage assets and that the general design principles behind mansard roofs, whilst appropriate in certain circumstances, are not appropriate for heritage assets.
7. The proposed mansard roof would subsume the entirety of the original main rear roof plane. Although the proposal picks up on design elements set out in the SPD, it would nonetheless be a bulky and incongruous addition to the main roof. Notwithstanding the scale of the rear outrigger, the proposal would unbalance the property and make it appear top-heavy. It would not, therefore, be subservient or subordinate in scale to the main building.
8. In wider views along the rear of Fieldhouse Road, the scale and bulk of the proposed roof would become clearer still. It would detract from the characterful uniformity and rhythm evident along the rear of this part of Fieldhouse Road established by the relatively simple and consistent roof form and the distinctively large paired rear outriggers. It would appear dominant and incongruous within the surrounding roofscape, to the harm and detriment of the overall character and appearance of the host building, and the wider terraced streetscene.
9. For the reasons set out above, I conclude therefore that the proposed mansard roof extension would harm the character and appearance of the host building, and the character and appearance of the Fieldhouse Road. In so doing, the proposal would neither preserve nor enhance the character or appearance of the Hyde Farm Estate Conservation Area. As such, the proposal would conflict with Policies Q2, Q5, Q11 and Q22 of the Lambeth Local Plan 2015 (the Local Plan). These policies, together with the SPD, require high quality design that sustains and reinforces the local distinctiveness of Lambeth in a manner that responds to the positive aspects of local context and character.
10. In finding harm to the character and appearance of the host building and the surrounding area, I also conclude that the proposal would cause harm to the character and appearance of the Hyde Farm Estate Conservation Area. In the parlance of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) I find this harm to be less than substantial. However, in accordance with the provisions of the Framework, any harm should require clear and convincing justification, and the harm should be weighed against public benefit.

11. I acknowledge that the proposal would provide a usefully enlarged master bedroom. However, the public benefits arising from the proposal would be minimal and would not be sufficient to outweigh the harm identified above. The proposal would therefore also fail to accord with national policy.
12. With regard to the additional rooflight to the front elevation, I note that rooflights, whether they are in the singular or multiple, are not uncommon on properties along both sides of Fieldhouse Road. Indeed, there is already one rooflight on the left hand side of the front elevation of No 33A. However, I am satisfied that the particular characteristics that define the street frontage – the curved, semi-circular two storey bays with distinctive pitched tiled roofs above, the Dutch-style gables on buildings at the end of each block and the build-up party wall parapets – are such that the additional rooflight would not be visually prominent on the front of the appeal property.
13. I do not therefore share the Council's concern about the degree to which the additional rooflight would be visible from the street. In longer views along the terrace the distinctive features that I have noted above would largely obscure views of the rooflight. Whilst I conclude that this element of the proposal would not cause harm to the character or appearance of the host property or wider streetscene, and would therefore preserve the character or appearance of the Conservation Area, this lack of harm is not sufficient to outweigh that which would arise from the mansard roof extension that I have identified above.

Other Matters

14. I was able to view other dormer windows that were visible from the rear of the appeal property, including the example specifically referred to at Appendix 1 of the appellant's statement of case. However, whilst I do not know the full circumstances or details of that particular example, or of those evident on adjacent properties visible in that aerial photograph, I am satisfied that they do not define or alter the distinctive characteristics of the Conservation Area.
15. In any event, neither that particular example, nor the other roof alterations visible in the aerial photograph at Appendix 1 were of a mansard-type design or appearance, and I was not able to observe any other such examples from the rear of the property. I note the appellant's reference to a recently approved large dormer roof extension at 79 Emmanuel Road but I have not been provided with any further information or details regarding that proposal. I am thus unable to determine whether it stands comparison to the appeal proposal, including in respect of scale, appearance and position on the host property. In any event, I have to determine the appeal on its own merits and on the basis of the evidence before me. I therefore give these examples limited weight.

Conclusion

16. For the reasons set out, and having regard to all other matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Graeme Robbie

INSPECTOR