

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 8 November 2016

by Michael Evans BA MA MPhil DipTP MRTPI

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

Decision date:

Appeal Ref: APP/C5690/D/16/3157996

2 Seymour Gardens, London SE4 2DN

- 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 City Lofts London against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Lewisham.
 - The application Ref DC/16/096890 was refused by notice dated 27 July 2016.
 - The development proposed is described on the application form as a 'loft conversion with rear facing dormer and front roof lights'.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main issue

2. The main issue in this appeal is the effect on the character and appearance of the locality.

Reasons

3. Seymour Gardens comprises a 1980s development of largely two storey terraced houses and blocks of flats. There is some variation in the appearance of individual dwellings and overall buildings with regard to matters such as materials and other details, while the blocks of flats tend to have a greater bulk. The Appellant suggests that there have been alterations to the original buildings that include replacement windows and that the streetscene is not uniform.
 4. However, despite these matters the development is characterised by the clean and uncluttered lines of the traditional pitched roofslopes, where there is a general absence of additions. Roof level extensions are found elsewhere in the wider locality but the Council's contention that none have been permitted in Seymour Gardens has not been disputed. Although the host dwelling is not a Listed Building and the street is not within a Conservation Area, this results in a pleasant degree of cohesion and identity.
 5. The proposed roof addition would be set back from the eaves and sides while not projecting above the ridge, with the materials used matching those of the host roof. However, I saw at my site visit that the dormer extension would be a particularly unusual and alien presence in this development and because of its flat roof form in particular it would not blend with the existing built form.
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6. Given this context, rather than being suitably small scale and complementing the host dwelling and terrace, the extension would be overly dominant and visually obtrusive. This is especially so given that the gaps to the sides would be fairly modest with the top virtually abutting the ridge of the roof. The addition would not be balanced by the gabled projection at the front of no. 1 Seymour Gardens. This is because the existing feature has a pitched roof form and it exhibits clean unaltered rooflines as with the other parts of the main roofscape of the terrace.
7. The view of the rear of the host dwelling from Seymour Gardens to the west towards the junction with Avignon Road would be at an oblique angle with the property set back from the street. However, despite these factors and the distance from the dwelling, the consistency of the rear roofscape of the terrace together with others further to the east can be appreciated, so that the obtrusive nature of the addition would be readily apparent. In consequence, the streetscene would be negatively affected.
8. As a result, it is concluded that the character and appearance of the locality would be harmed. There would be conflict with the intention of Development Management Local Plan, DM Policy 30 that there should be a positive relationship with the townscape. The proposal would also be contrary to the third and fourth criteria of DM Policy 31 because of the adverse effect on the architectural integrity of the group of buildings and the obtrusive impact on the long view from the street. The proposal would also fail to achieve the high standard and quality of design sought by DM Policies 30 and 31, as well as Core Strategy Policy 15.
9. The Council's Residential standards Supplementary planning document (SPD) includes guidance in relation to roof extensions. It is acknowledged that the proposal would satisfy this in relation to matters such as the set backs from the sides and by not projecting above the ridge of the main roof. However, I am not persuaded that compliance with these general guidelines should, as a matter of course, confer acceptability regardless of the circumstances of any particular case. In this instance the SPD would not be a sound reason for accepting the proposal given the harm and conflict with the development plan that would result.
10. Paragraph 9 of the National Planning Policy Framework (The Framework) indicates that sustainable development includes improving the quality of life and the conditions in which people live. The proposal would improve the accommodation by providing an additional bedroom.
11. However, the Framework includes the core principles that planning should always seek to secure high quality design and take account of the character of different areas with which there would be conflict. In this case I consider that the improved accommodation would be achieved at the undue expense of the quality of the built environment.
12. I am reinforced in my view regarding the detrimental impact of the development by the importance placed on design in the Framework where it is indicated that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development and is indivisible from good planning.
13. Paragraph 60 of the Framework indicates that decisions should not attempt to impose architectural styles or particular tastes. However, given the evidently

inappropriate nature of the development in the context of the host terrace and locality this is not a case where such a criticism applies.

14. In this instance planning permission is required because permitted development rights were removed by the Council when accepting the original development of Seymour Gardens. It is also the case that such rights have changed over the years since then. However, the fact that I have found the proposed development unacceptable vindicates the Council's approach in this matter. As a result and taking account of all other matters raised, it is determined that the appeal fails. In reaching this decision I have taken account of the views of local residents, including those expressed in favour of the proposal.

M Evans

INSPECTOR