
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 22 November 2016

by John L Gray DipArch MSc Registered Architect

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

Decision date: 5 December 2016

Appeal Ref. APP/L5810/D/16/3159279

83 Archway Street, Barnes, London, SW13 0AN

- 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 Ms Mary Healy against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames.
 - The application, ref. 16/2488/HOT, dated 21 June 2016, was refused by notice dated 16 August 2016.
 - The development proposed is a loft extension.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue in the appeal is the design quality of the proposed dormer and the effect it would have on the character and appearance of no. 83 itself, the terrace and the Thorne Passage Conservation Area.

Reasons

3. No. 83 is part of a 2-storey terrace of houses of varying designs, clearly not all built as one, and probably not by the same builder, but nevertheless having a relatively consistent quality and appearance. Nos. 83 and 85 have traditional dormer windows at the rear – fairly small, with single windows and pitched roofs, occupying (on elevation) less than 20% of the roof plane. What is proposed for no. 83 is a very large dormer – with a single window to the loft landing and a double window to the bedroom, flat-roofed, with a box-like form, occupying not far short of 50% of that same roof plane.
 4. Adopted Core Strategy Policy CP7 requires new development to recognise distinctive local character. Policy DM DC 1 of the adopted Development Management Plan requires high architectural and design quality, with regard to be had (amongst other things) to local character and to design and materials. Policy DM HD 1 requires new development to preserve and enhance the character and appearance of a conservation area. At first glance, this seems to go a little further than statute, which requires “special attention [to] be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of” a conservation area. The National Planning Policy Framework sets out how that duty should be undertaken. The adopted Supplementary Planning Document on House Extensions and External Alterations gives guidance on the scale and design of roof extensions – amongst other things, they should be in scale with the existing structure, should not project above the ridge line, should not
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dominate the original roof and should ensure sensitivity to the existing character (the example given being that a flat-roofed dormer may be out of character with the existing building).

5. The proposed design may well achieve certain things – it is set back from the eaves, below the ridge and in from the party walls – but it cannot be said that it would not be both prominent and dominant. To say that it would occupy less than 50% of the roof plane is to understate the impact – all that would remain of the roof pitch would be narrow strips around the dormer. The box-like form of the dormer would break the skyline in many views from ground level, even though its flat roof would be (just) below the existing ridge line. It would certainly disrupt the generally consistent roof planes of the terrace in a way that the small existing dormers on nos. 83 and 85 do not. Its windows would be out of keeping with the traditional pattern of openings in the walls below (the window detailing might be similar but windows occupying almost the full extent of the dormer would be wholly out of keeping with traditional ratios of window to wall). All told, there is little to commend it as a design that would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Conservation Area.
6. The existing dormers (roof extensions) at nos. 75 and 77 are clear evidence of that. Little of the original roof plane remains on either house, something made worse by there being two such large dormers side-by-side. While one dormer of this size and form is inappropriate, the cumulative effect of more than one is disproportionately greater.
7. To sum up, what is proposed conflicts with all of the policies referred to in paragraph 4 above. Accordingly, the appeal must fail. The existing dormers at nos. 75 and 77, and also those referred to in the grounds of appeal (in Cross Street and Eleanor Grove), cannot set a precedent for allowing development that would harm the character and appearance of the house itself, the terrace of which it is part and the wider Conservation Area. It may be argued that the Council was inconsistent in refusing the application when it had approved earlier ones (between 2006 and 2014) but this appeal decision has been made purely on the merits of the proposal itself; with reference to section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, the desirability of preserving the character and appearance of the Conservation Area outweighs any merit that might be seen in maintaining consistency with past decisions.

John L Gray

Inspector