

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 2 December 2016

by Gary Deane BSc (Hons) DipTP MRTPI

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

Decision date: 20 December 2016

Appeal Ref: APP/C5690/D/16/3161102
7 Watson's Street, London SE8 4AU

- 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 Paul Foster against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Lewisham.
 - The application Ref DC/16/096367 was refused by notice dated 19 July 2016.
 - The development proposed is the erection of a double mansard loft conversion to create third bedroom/study room.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural matter

2. I have dealt with another appeal¹ on this site. That appeal is the subject of a separate decision.

Main issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the host building and the local area.

Reasons

4. The appeal site is the roof of 7 Watsons' Street, which is a modest sized mainly 2-storey Victorian cottage in a terrace of similar properties. It lies within an area of mixed character wherein buildings vary considerably in scale, height, age and style. Attached to the 2-storey terrace is a 4-storey building with a mansard roof that occupies a prominent position at the junction of Watson's Street and New Cross Road. Mansard roofs are also evident on several other properties in the local area, notably along New Cross Road.
5. On the east side of Watson's Street, broadly opposite and close to the site, is a 4 to 6-storey building in residential use that was recently granted planning permission on appeal². In that case, the Inspector similarly noted the variety in existing built form in the vicinity and, in particular, the variation in building heights with some nearby properties having mansard roofs.

¹ Ref APP/C5690/D/16/3161096

² Ref APP/C5690/A/13/2204610 dated 1 April 2014

6. Like the properties on each side, No 7 has a raised parapet wall to the front and a butterfly roof at the rear. In views from Watson's Street, the front parapet conceals the roof behind and gives a strong horizontal emphasis to the top of the appeal building and the wider 2-storey terrace of which it forms part. The parapet also forms a long and continuous linear feature, save for slight differences in height, which is a distinctive part of the 2-storey terrace and a noticeable feature of the local street scene to which No 7 belongs.
7. The proposal is to erect a mansard roof across the full width of No 7 between raised parapet walls to accommodate an additional bedroom/study, which would be served by a dormer windows and roof lights. In itself, the new addition would be modest in scale and height. It would be proportionate to the existing dwelling. The extension would be clad with artificial fibre cement slates and the sidewalls would be painted render. Other external materials could also be used and dealt with by a suitable condition.
8. At the front, the new mansard would be set back from although project noticeably above the raised parapet wall of the host terrace. In doing so, it would breach one of the key aspects of No 7 and the 2-storey terrace, which is the strong defining parapet, and create an abrupt visual break in the historic roof form. As the only mansard in the 2-storey terrace, the proposal would be obtrusive especially in longer views in both directions along Watson's Street. Although there is an eclectic mix of building styles and heights in the local area, and mansards on properties near to the site, it is in the context of the wider 2-storey terrace that the new development would be visually 'read'.
9. At the rear, the 2-storey terrace largely has a butterfly roof form. The new addition would fill the valley of No 7 and significantly raise the height of the roof over the entire width of the host building. The appearance of the finished roof of No 7 would be completely different to the rest of this row of 2-storey properties when viewed along Baildon Street. From this highway, the proposal would appear incongruous and at odds with the mass and rhythm of the established roof form for the 2-storey terrace.
10. In reaching this conclusion, I acknowledge that the roofscape in the local area is varied. However, the existing continuity of the 2-storey terrace and its roof form in the street scene is important in this case especially as more recent development has fragmented the streetscape. This particular 2-storey terrace is significant because it provides a coherent and broadly consistent feature when seen from Watson's Street. While mansard roofs are evident near to the site, and are an established feature on traditional style buildings, none of the examples that I saw during the site visit stood as a 'one off' within a 2-storey terrace that had an otherwise consistent roof form.
11. It may be that the townscape in the vicinity of the site would benefit from greater cohesion and unity. However, for the reasons given, the proposal would not in itself contribute to achieving these outcomes nor could it be justified as an appropriate response to the introduction of a taller and more substantial building on the opposite side of Watson's Street to the site.
12. The appellant states that the occupiers of No 9 would like to pursue a similar extension to that proposed. Others in the same 2-storey terrace may also follow suit. However, such proposals are not before me and would need to be

considered on their own merits as and when they are put forward. Even if I were persuaded that the grant of planning permission in this case would set a desirable precedent, and other similar schemes across the same terrace were also ready for determination, there is no mechanism before me to give certainty that such developments would be implemented together.

13. The Council's Supplementary Planning Document, *Residential Standards* (SPD) advises that roof extensions should retain the architectural integrity of the building. For the reasons given, the proposal would not do so. The SPD also states that roof extensions will not be permitted where any part of the addition will be above the main roof, as would be the case here.
14. The National Planning Policy Framework attaches great importance to the design of the built environment. It states that development should respond to local character and add to the overall qualities of an area. The appeal scheme would not adhere to these important principles.
15. Against that background, I conclude on the main issue that the proposed development would materially harm the character and appearance of the host building and the local area. As such, it conflicts with Policies 7.4 and 7.6 of The London Plan, Policy 15 of the Council's Core Strategy and DM Policies 30 and 31 of the Development Management Local Plan. These policies broadly seek to ensure that development achieves a high standard of design that respects the form of the original building and positively relates to the existing townscape.
16. The proposal would provide valuable additional living accommodation that would significantly improve the living conditions for the appellant and his family. I accept that the size of the existing house and its rooms are modest and that the current layout fails to meet most modern day occupier requirements. Natural light would also be received for a major part of the day into the newly created living space, unlike the rest of the property that is affected by overshadowing from neighbouring buildings. I have considerable sympathy for the appellant in wanting to enlarge and improve the building to provide a more suitable family home. However, there is nothing before me to demonstrate that the improvements sought could only be achieved in the manner proposed. On balance, these considerations do not outweigh the significant harm that I have identified in relation to the main issue.
17. I also acknowledge the appellant's dissatisfaction with the Council's handling of the application and the planning decisions made in relation to nearby developments. However, my remit is solely to determine the appeal.

Conclusion

18. For the reasons set out above, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Gary Deane

INSPECTOR