

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/A5840/D/16/3160205
11 Cookham Crescent, London SE16 6AW

- 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 M Chambers against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Southwark.
 - The application Ref 16/AP/2026 was refused by notice dated 13 July 2016.
 - The development proposed is the erection of rear dormer extension including raising lower roof ridge.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main issue

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

Reasons

3. A flat roof dormer extension is proposed on the rear roof slope of the appeal property, which is a 3-storey house with curved front and rear elevations within a split crescent of similar properties. It lies within a mainly residential area wherein there is some variety in building styles and types. The lower ridge of the main roof would also be slightly raised to facilitate access to the newly created living space at roof level. The proposal seeks to address the Council's concerns raised in relation to an earlier application for a similar but larger roof level extension at No 11 that was similarly refused planning permission.
 4. The appellant places some reliance on the precedents that they consider have been created by approved roof level extensions to dwellings elsewhere in the local area. Having walked around the area around the site, I agree that several schemes, including those to which the appellant has referred, share some common features with the proposal. From what I observed, these cases serve to illustrate that even modest changes to a building at a high level can have a significant impact on the character and appearance of that property and the streetscape of which it forms part. Some of the appellant's photographs of dormer extensions on other properties illustrate this. While I have taken into account the background to the particular developments that have been drawn to my attention, it is a central principle of the planning system that every proposal should be considered on its own merits.
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5. In this case, the splayed form of the proposed extension would broadly follow that of the host building with a gentle curve to the new rear elevation reflecting the shape of the rear wall below. The new dormer would be set in from the host roof on all four sides and with adequate space around it, the proposal would be a proportionate addition. Taken together with the use of external materials to match those of the host building and in the light of similar types of extension on nearby properties, a rear dormer would not, in principle, appear overly bulky nor would it necessarily be an uncharacteristic addition.
6. However, two full-length rear-facing windows would serve the new accommodation, which would fail to align with or satisfactorily relate to the size, shape and position of the windows below them. As a consequence, the proposal would disrupt the pattern and hierarchy in fenestration in the rear façade, where shorter and smaller windows than those proposed follow two lines, which is a distinctive feature of the host building. The presence of a Juliette style balcony to each new rear window would not unduly accentuate this awkward relationship. Nevertheless, I consider that the new dormer windows would spoil the intrinsic character of the host dwelling.
7. Public views of the new rear extension would be limited given its high level position and the screening provided by existing buildings. It would, however, be largely evident from Cookham Crescent, beyond the rear of the site, from which the new extension would draw the eye given the uneasy relationship between its windows and those below. Consequently, the appeal scheme would be obtrusive even in the context of the rear facades and some high level additions made to other nearby properties.
8. I acknowledge that some existing dormer extensions to which the appellant has referred have a similar window sizes and are arranged in a similar way to that proposed. In my opinion, these cases have respected the appearance of the host building and blended into the character of the local area with varying degrees of success. These examples do not, therefore, necessarily set a desirable precedent to follow. Even if the Council has been inconsistent in dealing with other roof level extensions and Juliette style balconies, it does not justify allowing the appeal scheme for the reasons that I have given.
9. The National Planning Policy Framework attaches great importance to the design of the built environment. It states that permission should be refused for development of poor design that fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area. For the reasons given, that would be the case with the proposal before me.
10. On the main issue, I conclude that the proposed development would cause significant harm to 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, Strategic Policy 12 of the Council's Core Strategy and Policy 3.12 of The Southwark Plan. These policies aim to ensure that development achieves high quality design that enhances the quality of the built environment. These policies underpin the guidance contained within the Council's Supplementary Planning Document *Residential Design Standards* (SPD), with which the proposal would also conflict.

11. The appellant considers that elements of the appeal scheme would qualify as permitted development and asserts that the Council had previously found the window sizes in the previously refused scheme to be acceptable. The appellant also states that the Council would find a dormer extension that is very similar to the proposal to be acceptable and that the differences between them would not be significant. Whether or not that is the case, planning permission is sought for the proposal, in its entirety, and it stands to be considered on its individual merits. Like the Council, I have assessed it on that basis. I also note the appellant's opinion that the advice contained within the Council's SPD for roof level extensions is, to some extent, more restrictive than the current allowances under permitted development.
12. The Council raises no objection to the new roof lights and to the raised lower ridge of the main roof. I, too, find these elements of the appeal scheme acceptable in scale, design and general appearance. However, these parts of the development are clearly linked to the new rear dormer, which is objectionable. Therefore, I am unable to issue a split decision that grants planning permission solely for them.

Conclusion

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

Gary Deane

INSPECTOR