
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 16 December 2016

by Gary Deane BSc (Hons) DipTP MRTPI

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

Decision date: 4 January 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/A5840/D/16/3158915
248 Lower Road, London SE8 5DJ

- 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 Norma Jean Worden-Rogers against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Southwark.
 - The application Ref 16/AP/2195 was refused by notice dated 25 July 2016.
 - The development proposed is described as a single storey loft extension. Replacing existing 'London/butterfly' roof with a Mansard loft extension. Existing roof type is not practical or maintainable. The aim is to match neighbouring loft extensions along the street. The Main street frontage will remain traditional with sash windows in keeping with the house. The rear extension will lend itself to a more contemporary design with a green roof.
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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. The appeal site is the roof of 248 Lower Road, which is a 3-storey dwelling within a long terrace that contains buildings that vary in style, height and detailing. In the terrace to which No 248 belongs some properties include mansard roofs that are visible from Lower Road and from the rear of the site. Mansard roofs and irregular rooflines are also features of other buildings and terraces in the area surrounding the site, examples and photographs of which have been drawn to my attention. With a modern style block of flats broadly opposite the site and commercial premises nearby, I share the appellant's opinion that there is no prevailing style to properties along Lower Road.
 4. Like the buildings on each side, No 248 has a raised parapet wall to the front that conceals the butterfly roof behind. The appellant states that the previous owners of the appeal dwelling renovated the roof and, in doing so, did not use the original tiles. Even so, in views from Lower Road, the existing roof form gives a strong horizontal emphasis to the top of the appeal building and completes its composition. Together with the properties on each side, there is an unbroken run of butterfly roofs with the front parapet establishing a long and largely continuous linear feature that unifies this part of the terrace. As
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- such, the existing roof makes a significant contribution to the architectural quality of the host building and the terrace. It is a notable feature of the street scene even among the varied built form within it and is locally distinctive.
5. The proposal is to erect a mansard roof across the full width of No 248 between raised party walls. In itself, the new addition would be modest in scale and height, and proportionate to the existing dwelling. The external materials to be used would also be appropriate. However, it would result in the loss of the butterfly roof and the new built form would project noticeably above the front parapet. In doing so, the appeal scheme would result in the loss of the historic roof form and breach a key aspect of the host building, which is the strong defining parapet wall, creating an abrupt visual break in an otherwise flat roofline. As the only mansard in the short row of properties to which No 248 belongs, the proposal would be obtrusive in views especially from Lower Road.
 6. 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 properties on either side of the site, which appear to be largely unaltered at roof level, that the new development would be visually 'read'. For these reasons, the proposal would undermine the architectural style of the host building and spoil its intrinsic character and that of the terrace.
 7. During the site visit, I saw several examples of roof level additions, which have respected the character of the host building and blended into the street scene to which they belong with varying degrees of success. The examples to which the appellant has referred serve to illustrate that extensions and alterations at a high level on properties can have a significant visual impact on the host building and the area to which it belongs. Consequently, the presence of mansard roofs or high level additions elsewhere does not, in itself, necessarily set a desirable precedent to follow. None of the extensions that I saw or which have been identified in the evidence are directly comparable with the scale and design of the proposal or in the relationship with existing development. In any event, each proposal must be assessed on its own merits, as I have done.
 8. It may be that the townscape in the vicinity of the site would benefit from greater cohesion and unity given the effect on local character of more recent developments close to the site. However, for the reasons given, the proposal would not in itself contribute to achieving these outcomes nor can it be justified as an appropriate response to the block of flats of contrasting style and materials broadly on the opposite side of Lower Road to the site.
 9. The appellant states that the occupiers of the adjacent properties will pursue a similar extension to that proposed. If these schemes were to come forward at the same time then it would introduce greater cohesion to the finished terrace than if the proposal itself were to come forward. However, such developments 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.
 10. The Council's 2015 Technical Update to the Residential Design Standards (2011) (RDS) states that all extensions should harmonise with the architectural

style, and 'read' as if they were part of, the original building. For the reasons given, the appeal scheme would not do so. The RDS also states that roof extensions will not be permitted where there is an unbroken run of butterfly roofs; where important historic roof forms would be lost; or if it projects above the height of the ridge to the main roof. The proposal would conflict with the RDS on each of these points.

11. The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) states that planning decisions should not impose architectural styles or particular tastes, nor stifle originality or initiative through unsubstantiated requirements to conform to certain development forms and styles. It is, however, proper to seek to promote or reinforce local distinctiveness and good design. The Framework also notes that development should respect local character and add to the overall qualities of an area. The proposal would not do so. The Framework also notes that planning permission should not be refused for buildings that promote high levels of sustainability because of concerns about incompatibility with an existing townscape if those concerns have been mitigated by good design, which is not the case here.
12. Against that background, I conclude on the main issue that the proposed development would materially harm to the character and appearance of 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 Policies 3.12 and 3.13 of the Southwark Plan (SP). These policies aim to ensure that development takes into account the principles of good urban design, is appropriate to its context and adds to the character of the area. It would also be contrary to the RDS and the Framework. Reference is also made to the Mayor of London's *Consultation of Upward Extensions* (2016). However, a copy of this document has not been provided and I am unaware from the submitted evidence of its precise status. As a result, I am unable to attach more than limited weight to it in support of the appellant's case.
13. The proposal would provide extra living accommodation that would improve the living conditions for the occupiers of No 248. It would also provide a remedy to the problems associated with the condition of the existing roof, which the appellant states is difficult to maintain with water leaking into the building. I have some sympathy for the appellant on both counts. However, there is nothing before me to demonstrate that these matters can only be resolved by introducing an extension in the manner proposed. There is also an opportunity to enhance biodiversity through the provision of a green roof and raised planters, which is supported by SP Policy 3.13 and the Framework. However, these matters do not outweigh the significant harm that I have identified.
14. The appellant considers that the Council has been inconsistent in its planning decisions in relation to other developments that have taken place and in withholding planning permission in respect of the proposal. However, my remit is solely to determine this appeal and to do so on its individual planning merits.

Conclusion

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

Gary Deane

INSPECTOR