

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 12 December 2016

by Tom Gilbert-Wooldridge BA (Hons) MTP MRTPI IHBC

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

Decision date: 4th January 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/W5780/D/16/3161550

85 Harpenden Road, Wanstead, London E12 5HL

- 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 Mrs Elsa Savvatianou against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Redbridge.
 - The application Ref 2767/16, dated 8 June 2016, was refused by notice dated 12 August 2016.
 - The development proposed is roof extension with rear projecting dormer window. Roof windows to front roof slope.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the development on the character and appearance of the area, with particular reference to Aldersbrook Conservation Area.

Reasons

3. Aldersbrook Conservation Area is an Edwardian suburb characterised by rows of terraced properties. Its significance is greatly informed by the overall architectural consistency of properties and a uniformity of building and plot sizes. The roofs of properties are a distinctive feature with pitched roof slopes and decorative gables. They can be seen from some distance between rows of terraces and from adjoining roads and corner plots. Harpenden Road forms part of the overall composition and the roofs of its properties make a positive contribution to the significance of the conservation area.
 4. The appeal property at 85 Harpenden Road is unaltered in terms of its roof slope. The rear roof slope of No 85 and its neighbouring properties are visible from Margaretting Road. From the bottom of the rear garden of No 85, the rear roof slope is obscured by a tree in the garden, but is visible nearer the top of the rear garden closer to the property.
 5. From my site visit, I observed that many properties along Harpenden Road and the wider conservation area retain the original roof shape at the rear. Roof extensions are still relatively few, meaning that they do not form a significant part of the character and appearance of the conservation area. Where rear dormer windows exist, they take on one of two main forms. The first group consist of large flat roof box dormers that tend to occupy the majority of the roof slope, such as 87 Harpenden Road adjacent to the appeal site and others to the west. The second group are pitched roof dormers, typically half the
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width of the flat roof box dormers, often paired together on one roof slope. I note that the Aldersbrook Conservation Area Care & Design Guide (ACACDG), produced as supplementary planning guidance by the Council in 2005, advocates pitched roof dormers.

6. I have not been provided with any information on the planning history of any existing dormer window, although I note from the information submitted by the Council that the dormer at No 87 was constructed in 2002 around the same time as the conservation area was designated. Indeed, many of the flat roof box dormers appear to be of a similar or earlier age of construction to No 87, with the pitched roof dormers of more recent construction. It is evident that flat roof box dormers are not the only form of roof extension within the conservation area. I give weight to the Council's recommended approach in the ACACDG which is intended to better manage change within the conservation area.
7. The proposed development would largely mimic the rear dormer at No 87, but would obscure the vast majority of the roof slope and would have an overly dominant appearance when viewed from the top of the rear garden. It would be out of scale and character with the house and the overall terrace. It would also be visible from Margaretting Road and result in a negative cumulative effect when viewed alongside No 87 and other dormers further along this side of Harpenden Road. I do not agree that a different design would necessarily look worse next to No 87. There are already a number of pitched roof dormers in the conservation area that broadly follow the ADACDG advice and are seen alongside flat roof dormers without ill effect.
8. Even if the rear roof slope of No 85 was not visible from any public viewpoint, the lack of visibility should not be the determining factor in deciding whether or not a proposal is acceptable in a conservation area. The designation covers the front and rear of properties, both public and private. I have given weight to the importance of roof slopes at the rear of properties in contributing to the significance of the conservation area, and have considered the effect of the proposed development on that significance.
9. For the above reasons, the proposal would result in harm to the significance of the conservation area. The harm would be less than substantial as the overall building form and layout would remain, but nevertheless, paragraph 134 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) requires such harm to be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.
10. The appellant states that the proposal would allow them to expand their living accommodation to meet their needs, but personal circumstances rarely constitute a public benefit. The appellant also contends that a smaller dormer would not provide adequate living space, but I have not been presented with any details to verify this. Thus, there are no public benefits that outweigh the harm to the significance of the conservation area.
11. In conclusion, the proposal would have a harmful effect on the character and appearance of the area and would not preserve or enhance the character and appearance of Aldersbrook Conservation Area. Therefore, it would not accord with Policy SP3 of the Redbridge Core Strategy 2008 and Policies E3 and BD1 of the Borough Wide Primary Policies (BWPP) Development Plan Document 2008. Amongst other things, these policies require development to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of conservation areas and be of a style,

massing, scale and design appropriate to the locality. It would also not accord with Policy BD5 of the BWPP, which requires dormer windows to not dominate the existing roof profile, and extensions to complement the character of the building.

12. The development would also fail to have regard to the Council's Householder Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document 2012 or the ACACDG, which advise that the size of dormers should be kept as small as possible with the used of pitched roof designs. Finally, it would not meet the aims of the NPPF in terms of not sustaining the significance of the conservation area, where the public benefits would not outweigh the harm.

Conclusion

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

Tom Gilbert-Wooldridge

INSPECTOR