
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 5 January 2017

by A J Mageean BA (Hons) BPI PhD MRTPI

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

Decision date: 23rd January 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/W5780/D/16/3159455

96 Harpenden Road, Wanstead, London E12 5HN

- 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 Tom Smith against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Redbridge.
 - The application Ref 3335/16, dated 12 July 2016, was refused by notice dated 7 September 2016.
 - The development proposed is loft conversion with dormer to rear sloping roof and 3 No conservation roof lights provided to the front roof slope.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are:
 - The effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the host building and wider Conservation Area; and,
 - Whether the proposal would have an adverse effect on the living conditions of the occupiers of nearby properties in terms of outlook.

Reasons

Character and appearance

3. The appeal site is a two storey end of terrace property located on the south side of Harpenden Road. It has a short front garden and longer rear garden. On its western side is a narrow walkway providing access to the rear. The back of the property has, in common with others in this terrace, a prominent two storey outrigger. This property also has a conservatory and a flat roofed single storey extension on its rear elevation.
 4. This property is described as 'Victorian style' and is located within the Aldersbrook Conservation Area, a designated heritage asset centred on a residential area. Houses in this area are characterised by a range of late Victorian and Edwardian architectural ornamentation, particularly through prominent bays and gable projections, decorative porches and window details.
 5. The application which is the subject of this appeal relates to a loft conversion which would require the insertion of a rear dormer window and three roof lights
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in the front roof slope. The slate-clad rear dormer would have a flat roof, the height of which would be no higher than the existing roofridge. Its western side would be around 1.2m from the gable end of the property and its eastern side would be close to the boundary with the adjoining property at No 98. Whilst it would be around 1.1m above the existing eaves level, a Juliet balcony would project to a slightly lower level, somewhat closer to the eaves.

6. The Council has detailed design guidance and advice relating to roof extensions and alterations¹. Guidance relating to the whole Borough contains various points including that in general dormers should be located symmetrically on the roof, or align with existing windows, be set a minimum of 0.5m below the ridgeline and be set in 1m from shared boundaries. Further guidance relating to this Conservation Area states that the width and height of dormer structures should be kept to a minimum, should be of pitched construction and of either hipped or gabled form to suit the characteristics of the original house.
7. The currently proposed dormer would take up a large proportion of the rear roof slope. It would not meet various aspects of the design advice given for such structures, particularly in terms of its box form, its position in relation to the ridgeline and shared boundary with No 98, and in terms of its lack of symmetry with windows in the existing house. In these respects the proposed dormer extension would be a significant and intrusive addition which would not relate well to the character of the host property.
8. I accept that the design proposed reflects the modest roof height of this dwelling. In this respect the appellant suggests that the proposal would represent a compromise between the guidance provided by the Council and his aspirations for additional accommodation. I also accept that the submitted design is considerably reduced from the pre-application proposal which featured a full-width dormer, and that the appellant submitted amended plans during the course of the application showing a slight reduction in the size of the proposed dormer. Furthermore, I accept that when viewed from the appellant's garden the proposed dormer would be to some extent concealed by the presence of the existing two storey outrigger. I also accept that it would not be visible in public views from Harpenden Road, from which the main qualities of the character and appearance of this area are appreciated.
9. However, this addition would be visible in views from the rear of the properties which front onto Dover Road to the south. Whilst I accept that the large coniferous tree at the end of the appellant's rear garden would to some degree screen this addition from properties directly to the rear, nonetheless it would be clearly visible from the rear of other properties in Dover Road, thereby impacting on the character and appearance of this wider area.
10. I accept that there are examples of box-type dormer extensions in the general vicinity of the appeal site. However, the review of planning applications relating to loft extensions within Harpenden Road presented by the appellant appears to demonstrate that no box-type dormer extensions have been approved since the introduction of the design guidance noted above.
11. In summary, the form and location of the proposed dormer would mean that it would not represent a sympathetic addition to the host property. Furthermore,

¹ Householder Design Guide: Supplementary Planning Document 2012 (SPD); Care and Design Guide for Aldersbrook Conservation Area: Supplementary Planning Guidance 2005 (SPG).

I have found that its introduction would have a detrimental effect on the character and appearance of the wider Conservation Area. In these respects this proposal would conflict with Policy SP3 of the London Borough of Redbridge Core Strategy Development Plan Document 2008 (the Core Strategy) and Policies BD1, BD5 and E3 of the London Borough of Redbridge Primary Policies Development Plan Document 2008 (the DPD), which require extensions to complement the characteristics of the host building and wider area.

Living conditions

12. The Council also suggests that this proposal would be detrimental to the visual amenity of nearby residents. However, whilst I have found this proposal to be damaging to the character and appearance of the host building and wider area, as this extension would be to some degree screened from the more immediate views from neighbouring properties, my view is that it would not be unduly intrusive in terms of residential outlook.
13. For this reason it would not have an adverse effect on the living conditions of the occupiers of nearby properties in terms of outlook. It would therefore not conflict with Policy SP3 of the Core Strategy or Policy BD1 of the DPD, both of which, amongst other things, seek to protect the amenity of the occupiers of neighbouring properties.

Conclusions

14. Whilst I have not found harm in relation to living conditions, I have found that the proposed design would not be an appropriate addition within this heritage asset. In coming to this view I have considered the fact that Government attaches great importance to design matters. Furthermore, the statutory duty in section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 is a matter of considerable importance and weight. In this case whilst the harm caused by the proposal would be significant, it would be less than the substantial harm referred to by the National Planning Policy Framework. However, no public benefits have been identified as accruing from this proposal to outweigh the harm to the significance of the designated heritage asset.
15. For these reasons I conclude that the appeal should fail.

AJ Mageean

INSPECTOR