

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 16 February 2017

by G Powys Jones MSc FRTPI

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

Decision date: 23rd February 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/G5180/D/16/3165217

42 Birch Tree Avenue, West Wickham, Kent, BR4 9EJ

- 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 Nencho Sakutov against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Bromley.
 - The application Ref DC/16/03903/FULL6, dated 14 August 2016, was refused by notice dated 3 October 2016.
 - The development proposed is a two-storey rear extension and loft conversion with side roof dormer construction.
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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 property and its surroundings.

Reasons

3. Birch Tree Avenue is sited on a slope and is comprised in the main of semi-detached dwellings of a relatively uniform appearance. In this regard the pairs are white rendered and display two storey curved bays at the front; a striking half-timbered gable tops these. The prominent tiled roofs either side of the ridge of each pair are steeply pitched. Viewed from the front, the appeal dwelling and its adjoining neighbour represent a typical example of local development. Overall, this is an attractive estate development of the inter-war period.
 4. Judging from the comprehensive officer report, the Council does not object to the rear extensions, or to that at the side below roof level. This is principally because they would have little or no impact on the public realm; several other local properties have been extended in a not too dissimilar manner, and they would not offend neighbouring residents' living conditions. I agree with the Council's assessment in this respect.
 5. The Council's concern is directed to the proposed loft conversion. In order to facilitate this a large flat roof, box-like dormer would be inserted in the side and rear roof slopes of the property.
 6. To my mind, although I understand that the dormer is of a lesser scale than a previous proposal, the insertion of a structure of such a bulky, mundane and
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utilitarian appearance would completely transform and destroy the roof's appearance and the dwelling's proportions. The harmful visual effects would be highly noticeable when viewed from the street outside, both front-on and in oblique views when approaching up the hill.

7. The appellant has submitted several photographs showing dormer roof extensions inserted in other properties in the street. The implication is that the appellant considers such development is not wholly uncharacteristic of the locality and that, in the interests of consistency, the current proposal should be allowed to proceed.
8. I saw most of the other dormers referred to during my site visit, but to my mind almost all detract from the character and appearance of their host properties and the street scene. Their presence does not justify further visually harmful development. Nor, on the issue of consistency, have I been provided with any evidence relating to their histories, that is, whether or not they were authorised by planning permission. However, I am aware that an appeal concerning a proposal for a similar roof alteration at 138 Birch Tree Avenue was dismissed in April last year (*Ref APP/G5180/D/16/3141882*).
9. I conclude that the loft conversion element of the proposed development, when complete, would sit harmfully and unacceptably in its visual context. Accordingly, a material conflict arises with those provisions of policies BE1 & H8 of the Council's Unitary Development Plan (UDP) requiring development not to detract from the street scene or adversely impact on local character.
10. Moreover, UDP policy H8 provides that dormer windows should be of a size and design appropriate to the roofscape and sited away from prominent roof pitches, unless dormers are a feature of the area. The proposed dormer is of an unacceptable design and would be sited prominently, contrary to policy. As already mentioned, whilst flat roofed side dormers are seen in the area, I regard them as unsightly additions, not original features.
11. All other matters raised in the representations have been considered and taken into account, including the references to the *National Planning Policy Framework*, but no other matter raised is of such strength or significance as to outweigh the considerations that led me to my conclusions.

G Powys Jones

INSPECTOR