

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 13 February 2017

by Chris Couper BA (Hons) DiP TP MRTPI

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

Decision date: 09 March 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/B1605/D/17/3166657
2 Courtenay Street, Cheltenham GL50 4LR

- 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 Vince Norvill against the decision of Cheltenham Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 16/01322/FUL, dated 15 July 2016, was refused by notice dated 26 August 2016.
 - The development proposed is described as 'replacement of existing rear roof light window with a dormer window. The proposed rear dormer window will be in keeping with the existing roof finish and will be kept below the ridge line so as not to be seen from the front elevation'.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural matters

2. In the above heading I have taken the description of the proposal from the application form, although, as it forms no part of the description of this scheme, I have omitted the last sentence which refers to an approved rear dormer on a house on an adjacent road.
3. Whilst I observed an existing dormer on this property's rear elevation, I have based my decision on the proposed dormer as set out on drawing no. 3 of 4.

Main Issue

4. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the host property and the area, including whether or not it would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Central Conservation Area.

Reasons

5. The site falls within the St Paul's part of the extensive Central Conservation Area ('the CA'). The St Paul's Character Area Appraisal and Management Plan 2008 describes this part of the CA as containing compact and modestly proportioned, high density, two storey artisan terraced housing. It states that those attributes, together with the plan form of the streets, and the consistent building lines, gives the area a distinctive identity. It regards the terrace that includes the appeal property as making a positive contribution to the area.

6. I observed that to the front, the repetitive detailing, regular proportions and consistent roof form of the dwellings in the long terraces gives this area a very ordered and cohesive character. There is greater diversity to the rear, with some properties having been significantly extended. However, although the appellant has provided Photo A showing a dormer window, that is very much the exception, and most of the terraces in the CA retain their simple shape, with sloping roofs, interrupted only by a regular sequence of parapet walls and chimneys.
7. No. 2 Courtenay Street ('No. 2') sits towards the end of one of these long terraces. Other than the unauthorised dormer at no. 2, the terrace has a largely unaltered sloping roof form. Notwithstanding no. 2's large, rather contrasting flat-roofed two storey extension, and some other single and two storey rear extensions in this row, the appeal scheme would disrupt the regular and cohesive form of the terrace's rear roof. Although the dormer would be faced with materials to match the colour of the slates, the harm that would be caused to its appearance would be compounded by the dormer's siting so close to the ridge, and by its significantly greater width than the window in the floor beneath, which would combine to give the property a 'top-heavy' appearance.
8. The harm that would be caused to this property and to the terrace would be visible from the private car park to the rear, as well as from the rear of some nearby dwellings, and from parts of Dunalley Parade close to the car park entry.
9. Although the appellant refers to an approved flat-roofed rear dormer on a nearby property (Ref: 16/00501/FUL), it is on a different road to this scheme. That approval does not change my conclusions regarding the harm that this scheme would cause to this terrace's long, straight, uniform roof.
10. For those reasons the scheme would conflict with those parts of policies CP 3 and CP 7 of the Cheltenham Borough Local Plan Second Review 2006 which require, in broad terms, that development be of a high architectural design standard which conserves and enhances the best of the built environment, and that extensions do not harm the integrity of a building or group of buildings. It would also conflict with the advice in the Residential Alterations and Extensions Supplementary Planning Document 2008 that the width of dormers should not harm the appearance of the house.
11. I note that no objections have been raised by neighbours. However, having paid special attention to the statutory duty, I conclude that the scheme would neither preserve nor enhance the character or appearance of the CA. In accordance with paragraph 132 of the National Planning Policy Framework I have given great weight to the conservation of this designated heritage asset. Although the harm caused to it would be less than substantial, the appellant states that there would be no public benefits from the proposal. In my view, even if there is a limited public benefit arising from the small amount of additional accommodation that would be provided, it is significantly outweighed by the harm that I have found. Consequently, and having regard to all other matters raised, the appeal is dismissed.

Chris Couper

INSPECTOR