

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 13 March 2017

by G Powys Jones MSc FRTPI

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

Decision date: 27 March 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/Z0116/D/16/3166841
29 Argus Road, Bristol, BS3 3NY

- 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 Geoffrey Clark against the decision of Bristol City Council.
 - The application Ref 16/05404/H, dated 1 October 2016, was refused by notice dated 13 December 2016.
 - The development is a front dormer extension.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary matters

2. An unauthorised front dormer had previously been inserted. An application to regularise the breach of control was refused permission by the Council, and a subsequent appeal against that decision was dismissed on 12 August 2016 (Ref: APP/Z0166/D/16/3150874). The unauthorised dormer had been removed by the time of my visit, with the subsequent gap in the roof being subject to temporary weather protection.
3. The applicant seeks to modify the design of the originally inserted dormer. Whilst the dormer would be of the same width as before, its shape would alter in the sense that it would display a sloping roof with a central apex, rather than the flat roof originally inserted. It would not be as tall at the front as the previous scheme.
4. The recent planning history is material to my considerations, although I am not bound by my colleague's comments or conclusions. Accordingly, the appeal, as required, shall be treated on its merits.

Main issue

5. The main issue is the effect of the development on the character and appearance of the host property and its surroundings.

Reasons

6. The previous Inspector described the appeal property and its surroundings in the following terms:

The appeal relates to an end of terrace property on the corner of Argus Road and Cripps Road, situated within a mixed residential area south of West Street.

Immediately to the rear of the appeal site is a large apartment complex and car park, adjacent to which are industrial garages.

Terraced properties within Argus Road are of a similar scale and type but feature differences in roof forms, architectural details and materials. The appeal dwelling and two adjacent properties differ in appearance from other houses in the terrace, with simpler front elevations, although a modern bay window has been added to the neighbouring property. Nevertheless, the front roof pitch and overall form of No 29 matches that of the remainder of the terrace and, consequently, it appears as an integral part of the row. This consistency of form, including the relatively unaltered roofscape, contributes beneficially to the character and appearance of Argus Road.

7. Nothing of note has changed in the interim, and I share my colleague's view as to the street's largely unaltered front roofscape's positive contribution to the local visual scene. Moreover, since the appeal property is located at the end of the terrace, it is more visually exposed than other dwellings comprised within the terrace, especially when viewed when approaching from the south-east.
8. Notwithstanding the variation in the design the proposed dormer would remain bulky in its context and would appear incongruous in an otherwise largely unaltered roofscape. In view of the property's prominence on a corner plot, the dormer would be widely seen from within the street, so that the visual harm caused would be accentuated.
9. I conclude that the proposed roof modifications at the front would harm the character and appearance of the host property and its surroundings. Accordingly, a clear conflict arises with those provisions of policy BCS21 of the Bristol Development Framework Core Strategy, and policy DM30 of the Site Allocations and Development Management Policies, directed to promoting high quality urban design and that alterations to existing property should respect the siting, scale, form, proportions, details and the overall design and character of the host building and the broader street scene.

Other matters

10. The appellant has provided photographs of other dormers built in the locality, but I am not been made aware of the full circumstances of the cases referred to. Nevertheless, the examples provided by the appellant seem to me to represent poor design, such as is best avoided.
11. I am mindful that a successful appeal could encourage others to pursue similar proposals, which the Council may find difficult to resist, thus multiplying the harm to the street scene. Precedent is seldom a good reason, in itself, to refuse permission but in this case it is considered material, given that a successful appeal would probably lead to greater visual harm. The issue of precedent serves to reinforce my conclusions on the main issue.
12. I acknowledge the appellant's point that development to the rear of the appeal property is of a different scale and type to the more modest two-storey development found in Argus Road. However, this does justify the grant of permission to a proposal that I have found to be of a poor design.
13. All other matters referred to in the representations have been taken into consideration, including those made by local residents. Whilst I understand the privacy concerns raised, I share the Council officers' view, for the same reasons, that an objection on this basis is not sustainable.

14. 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