
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 12 April 2017

by G Powys Jones MSc FRTPI

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

Decision date: 05 May 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/M5450/D/17/3169677

42a Tonbridge Crescent, Harrow, Middlesex, HA3 9LE

- 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 J Kotocha against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Harrow.
 - The application Ref P/5480/16, dated 16 November 2016, was refused by notice dated 27 January 2017.
 - The development proposed is described as a loft conversion; rear dormer; two rooflights to front elevation & internal alterations.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main issues

2. The main issues are: (a) the effect of the development on the character and appearance of the host property and its surroundings and (b) the acceptability of future residents' living conditions with particular reference to internal space standards.

Reasons

Character & appearance

3. The appeal property is a first floor flat, which the applicant wishes to convert by providing additional living accommodation in the loft. To facilitate this a flat roofed dormer would be installed at the rear, and this would extend almost the full width of the roof, with its highest point just below the ridge.
 4. Design advice on rear dormers of this type is provided in the Council's Supplementary Planning Document: Residential Design Guide (SPD). This states that, generally, dormers should be subordinate features in the roof. The SPD further clarifies that in order to achieve visual containment within the roof slope dormers should be designed to achieve at least minimum levels of spacing from the roof's main features and boundaries.
 5. The submitted design does not adhere to the guidance provided in the SPD. The outcome is that the rear dormer, if built, would be perceived as a dominating, ugly structure of a utilitarian appearance, harmful to local visual amenity. Whilst the dormer could not be seen from the street at the front, it would be widely apparent from the spacious rear gardens of adjoining streets in Glebe Avenue and Glebe Crescent, and from some rear gardens in Tonbridge Crescent.
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6. The appellant says that similar structures are apparent on other properties in the locality, including on No 46's rear roof. I saw that to be the case but most neighbouring rear roofs remain relatively unspoilt, and those properties exhibiting rear dormers of the type proposed do not assist the appellant's case because, in my view, they exemplify poor design.
7. I therefore conclude that the proposal would harm the character and appearance of the host property and surrounding area. Accordingly, a clear conflict arises with those provisions of policies 7.4, 7.6 of the London Plan, policy CS1 B of the Harrow Core Strategy and policies DM1 of the Harrow Development Management Local Plan Policies (PLP), which, in combination, require new development to be of a high standard of design and respectful of local architecture and character.

Living conditions

8. The existing flat's first floor layout would be slightly modified to provide an open plan lounge/dining/kitchen area, a bedroom and a bathroom. Another bedroom and bathroom would be provided in the proposed loft. The appellant has not seriously disputed the Council's view that the completed development should be properly regarded as a 4-person dwelling. Given the size and shape of both bedrooms, I consider the Council's view to be reasonable.
9. In March 2015, the government published new '*Technical housing standards – nationally described space standard*', and its intended role in planning is described in *Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)*. I consider that the national standards provide the most relevant and up-to-date guidance available. Indeed, table 3.3 of the London Plan (LP) was amended in March 2016 to reflect the new national standards.
10. In the terms of the national standards referred to earlier, and the amended London Plan, a 2 bed, 4-person two-storey dwelling should have a minimum Gross Internal Area (GIA) of 79 sq.m. The appellant's calculations, even by including the circulation space on the ground floor, show the available space to fall significantly short of the minimum requirement.
11. I therefore conclude that the proposed floorspace provided would not meet the minimum space standards of accommodation advised nationally and in the LP, and that living conditions for future residents would therefore prove cramped and unacceptable. Accordingly, a clear conflict arises with those provisions of LP policy 3.5 and PLP policies DM 1 and DM 26 concerned with providing housing, including conversions, of a high standard.
12. I have taken account of all other matters raised in the representations, but none is of such strength or significance as to outweigh the considerations that led me to my conclusions.

G Powys Jones

INSPECTOR