
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 2 May 2017

by C J Ford BA (Hons) BTP Dist. MRTPI

a person appointed by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government

Decision date: 12 May 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/E5330/D/17/3171426

79 Westcombe Park Road, Blackheath, London SE3 7QS

- 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 Antony Golsby against the decision of the Council of the Royal Borough of Greenwich.
 - The application Ref 16/3648/F, dated 3 November 2016, was refused by notice dated 22 December 2016.
 - The development proposed is loft conversion with the addition of side and rear dormers.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main issue

2. The main issue in this case is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the host property, the pair of which it forms a part and the surrounding area.

Reasons

3. The appeal site is located within the Westcombe Park Conservation Area (CA). In determining the appeal it is therefore necessary to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the CA. The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) also sets out that conservation areas are designated heritage assets and that great weight should be given to the asset's conservation.
4. The area is primarily residential and mainly comprises Victorian and Edwardian two and three storey houses. However, the appeal property and its attached neighbour are of a fairly typical two storey bay fronted inter-war semi-detached design. They have a simple hipped roof form of a modest height and pitch. As seen from the front, which is arguably the most important view because it is a public one, they have a visually pleasing degree of symmetry at the roof level.
5. As highlighted by the appellant, numerous dormers exist within the vicinity of the site and the variety in the roofscape forms part of the character of the CA. Nevertheless, the Westcombe Park Conservation Area Character Appraisal (2010) warns of the danger of unsympathetic and dominating roof extensions which detract from the character of the host building and the CA.

6. The Council's reason for refusal specifically refers to the side dormer extension. This would be set back a short distance from the eaves and set down by a small degree from the ridge. In the context of the front roof profile, the dormer would therefore transverse the majority of the side roof slope.
7. As a consequence of this and notwithstanding the use of matching materials, the dormer would appear as a bulky and unduly dominant addition against the modest proportions of the roof. The hipped roof of the dormer and the inclusion of a roof light on its front facing elevation would also result in a level of complexity that would jar with the existing simple roof form.
8. The resulting top heavy appearance would detract to an unacceptable degree from the existing pleasing symmetry with the attached neighbouring property. It would unduly unbalance the pair of houses as they appear in the street scene. The dormer would be an unsympathetic and dominating roof extension of the nature that the Character Appraisal warns against.
9. The Framework specifies that where a development leads to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, which applies in this case because the development only affects a small part of the CA, this should be weighed against the public benefits of the development.
10. The benefit of providing additional living space at a family home does not outweigh the identified harm. It is also noted the proposal represents a modified scheme from one previously refused by the Council. However, it is apparent from the findings above that the changes made are insufficient to make the revised scheme acceptable.
11. Accordingly, it is concluded that the proposed development would have an unacceptably harmful effect on the character and appearance of the host property, the pair of which it forms a part and the surrounding area. It would fail to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the CA.
12. The development would conflict with Policies 7.4, 7.6 and 7.8 of the London Plan (2016) as well as Policies DH1, DH3, DH(a) and DH(h) of the Council's Core Strategy with Detailed Policies (2014). Amongst other things, the policies require residential extensions to be of a design and scale appropriate to the building and locality. They also seek to conserve the significance of heritage assets.
13. The development would similarly conflict with the Council's Supplementary Planning Document 'Residential Extensions, Basements and Conversions Guidance' (2016). It specifies that all new residential extensions should be sensitive to the original building and respect the street scene and character of the area.

Other matters

14. The appellant has drawn attention by way of a photographic survey to over 80 locations in the nearby area where there are existing examples of dormers. Many of these appear to be original modest dormer windows rather than subsequent bulky dormer roof extensions and so do not have the same dominating effect as the appeal proposal. Where that is not the case, it is not always made clear whether they pre-date the designation of the CA, are lawful or were considered against the current planning policy framework, as must

apply in this case. It is noted that a small number including Nos 107 and 109 Maze Hill are located outside of the CA.

15. With regard to the side dormer recently granted permission at No. 22 Vanbrugh Hill, its immediate setting differs from the appeal site. In response to the land rising, the ridge of the attached neighbouring property is set at a higher level to No. 22. The roof height and roof pitch of these properties also appears to be greater than at the appeal site, resulting in a dormer that does not have the same visual impact as the proposed scheme.
16. In any event, the principle to be followed in decision making is that each case should be considered on its own merits. Other developments in the area do not provide justification for the appeal scheme which is found to be harmful in its own right and conflicts with planning policy.

Conclusion

17. For the reasons given above and having regard to all other matters raised, the appeal is dismissed.

C J Ford

APPOINTED PERSON