

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 13 June 2017

by K E Down MA(Oxon) MSc MRTPI MRSB

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

Decision date: 28th June 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/Y3615/D/17/3172658

10 Forster Road, Guildford, Surrey, GU2 9DF

- 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 W McMillen against the decision of Guildford Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 16/P/02457, dated 7 December 2016, was refused by notice dated 2 February 2017.
 - The development proposed is a loft conversion incorporating new dormer window to flank elevation and two rooflights within existing roofs.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. There is one main issue which is the effect of the proposed side dormer and front gable window on the character and appearance of the host dwelling and the street scene of Forster Road.

Reasons

3. The appeal site is a modern, detached, two storey dwelling situated on a housing estate known as Queen Elizabeth Park. The area of the estate in which the appeal dwelling stands has been designed to reflect the Arts and Crafts style with careful detailing to dwellings. The layout close to the appeal site, around an obelisk, is spacious and retained mature trees in the vicinity give a verdant and established character. The appeal dwelling stands in a prominent location, close to the obelisk and, with its handed neighbour, forms an informal gateway to a flatted development, Annesley House, also built in the Arts and Crafts style.
 4. The proposed loft conversion would be mainly within the existing roof void and the Council raises no objection to this in principle. Neither does it object to the proposed roof lights. I agree that these would be acceptable. Occupiers of Annesley House raise concerns relating to overlooking but the rear roof lights would be over a stair well and above head height and so loss of privacy would not occur. I shall therefore limit my further consideration of the main issue to the proposed gable window and side dormer.
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5. The gable window would be on the front elevation and visible in the street scene. It would be centred and noticeably narrower than the central window below. As such neither the symmetry nor the proportions of the gable end would be harmed. The Council raises concerns about the proximity of the window to the eaves. However, there are similar examples of second floor gable windows on other dwellings on the estate and second floor front gable windows on dwellings close to the appeal dwelling. I am therefore satisfied that the proposed window would not appear out of place.
6. The proposed side dormer would be of modest proportions and occupy a relatively small area of the roof slope. It would therefore not be out of keeping in terms of scale with other roof dormers nearby. However, it would have a pitched roof with a gable and would extend almost to the ridge of the dwelling. This would be at odds with other nearby second floor roof dormers which are all set down noticeably below the ridge and either flat topped or hipped.
7. Moreover, the dormer would be higher than the secondary ridge of the dwelling which runs at 90 degrees to the main ridge from the opposite roof slope. In consequence the unusually high position of the dormer would appear lopsided when viewed from the front of the dwelling. In the context of both the front and side elevations it would appear as an incongruous addition. The pitched gabled roof would only serve to emphasise the lack of harmony. Overall it would therefore have a significantly detrimental effect on the character and appearance of the host dwelling.
8. The dormer would also be prominent in the street scene, being visible on the "gateway" elevation to Annesley House, and would thus have a materially harmful effect on the character and appearance of the street scene of Forster Road.
9. The appellant has drawn my attention to other roof dormers in the area which he believes may set a precedent for the appeal dormer but, with the exception of the dormer at 52 Forster Road which is of different design on a different house type and in a different part of the estate from the appeal dwelling, those that have pitched gabled roofs extending to the ridge appear to be smaller structures, on single storey sections of dwellings, in parts of the estate not visible from the appeal dwelling where the effect is materially different.
10. The appellant suggests that a non-matching dormer would continue the Arts and Crafts philosophy of the estate by creating something individual. It is also pointed out that it complies with advice in the Council's Supplementary Planning Guidance: Residential Extensions (SPG), adopted 2003. However, the SPG provides general advice that may not be applicable in all cases and whilst the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) makes clear that innovative design should not be stifled without reason it states that it is proper to seek to promote or reinforce local distinctiveness. I therefore find little merit in this argument.
11. It is concluded on the main issue that whilst the gable end window would have no significant effect, the proposed side dormer would be materially detrimental to the character and appearance of the host dwelling and the street scene of Forster Road. In consequence it would conflict with saved Policies G5 and H8 of the Guildford Borough Local Plan, 2003, the NPPF and the Council's SPG, which, taken together expect new development to show a high standard of design that

respects and harmonises with surrounding development and in the case of extensions to dwellings, including roof extensions, respects the appearance of the host property and has no adverse effect on the character of the dwelling or that of the immediate surroundings.

12. The appellant points out that the proposed loft conversion would make efficient use of the roof space and that the additional accommodation is needed for his growing family. That may be so. However, the principle of a loft conversion is not in dispute and whilst I have sympathy with the needs of the family for additional space this would not outweigh the identified harm that would be caused to the character and appearance of the host dwelling and the surrounding area.
13. For the reasons set out above and having regard to all other matters raised, including the representations of third parties, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

KE Down
INSPECTOR