
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 27 July 2017

by Elaine Gray MA(Hons) MSc IHBC

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

Decision date: 04 August 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/A5840/D/17/3174895

14 Nutfield Road, London SE22 9DG

- 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 Mark and Mrs Sarah Gatley against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Southwark.
 - The application Ref 17/AP/0143, dated 13 January 2017, was refused by notice dated 8 March 2017.
 - The development proposed is loft development with mansard extension to accommodate a bedroom and a shower room.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the surrounding area, and the effect of the proposal on the living conditions of neighbouring residents, with particular regard to outlook and visual impact.

Reasons

Character and appearance

3. The appeal site at 14 Nutfield Road is a two storey building located within a terrace of similar dwellings. To the rear elevations, the terrace is characterised by butterfly roofs, whilst along the fronts, the roofs are concealed behind distinctive parapet walls. The proposal would create a mansard roof extension which would provide additional living space at No 14.
4. The existing front and rear parapet walls would be retained, with the mansard roof extension being set behind these structures. The extension would rise to a maximum height of approximately 2.7m, and would extend the full width of the property, incorporating vertical openings.
5. On my site visit, I was able to see from the ground the tops of the pots on the front chimney. The chimney structure would be raised in height, and the front elevation of the new mansard would be set forward of the position of the front chimney. As a result, I conclude that the upper parts of the structure would be visible from the street, as demonstrated by the submitted 'Proposed Long Section, which shows a sight line from the opposite pavement.
6. The Council's document entitled '2015 Technical Update to the Residential Design Standards – Supplementary Planning Document' (SPD, 2011) states

that roof extensions will not be permitted in terraces which are completed compositions, and where there is an unbroken run of butterfly roofs. In this case, the proposal would add significant bulk at high level which would alter the traditional form of the concealed roof, which is a key architectural characteristic of the terrace.

7. By disrupting the completed composition of the terrace, the development would appear at odds with its uniform appearance, thus harmfully detracting from its overall character. The new windows would add a further element of visual complexity at roof level, interrupting the rhythm and simplicity of the appeal site and its neighbours.
8. At the rear, the development would introduce a built form which would be at odds with the traditional form of the butterfly roof. It would result in disproportionate bulk at high level, and would thus fail to appear subservient to the existing building. Whilst the back elevation of the proposal would have a minimal visual impact on the street scene, it would be incongruous in views from the rear gardens and elevations of the properties in the vicinity.
9. My attention has been drawn to other examples of mansard roof extensions in the street. At 16 Nutfield Road, permission was granted in 2004 for a mansard roof extension (Ref 04-AP-0613). However, this proposal was considered under policies which have now been superseded by the current local and national policies. That being the case, its presence would not justify the harm that would arise from the appeal scheme before me.
10. I have also been referred to mansard roof extensions at 3, 4 and 5 Nutfield Road, and a recent planning permission (Ref 16-AP-1983) which was granted in error by the Council at 26 Nutfield Road. However, it is clear from these examples that such extensions are in the minority in Nutfield Road, and are not a typical characteristic of the local built form. I accept that the completed examples are not particularly prominent in the streetscape. However, as set out in my reasoning above, the appeal development will be more readily visible, and so will be proportionately more harmful to the character of the terrace.
11. I have also had regard to the rear roof developments at 1 and 3 Archdale Road. However, these are a different form of development and so are not directly comparable to the appeal scheme.
12. Drawing the above factors together, I conclude that the proposed development would unacceptably harm the character and appearance of the surrounding area. It would thus conflict with Policy 3.12 of the Southwark Plan (SP, 2007), insofar as it requires developments to enhance the quality of the built environment, and SP Policy 3.13, which requires principles of good urban design to be taken into account in all developments. It would also conflict with the advice given in the SPD.
13. The development would further be at odds with Policy 7.4 of the London Plan (LP, March 2016), insofar as it requires that development should have regard to the form and structure of an area, place or street, LP Policy 7.6, which amongst other things states that architecture should make a positive contribution, and the National Planning Policy Framework, which seeks to secure high quality design.

Living conditions

14. The Council have also raised concerns in respect of the effect on living conditions of neighbouring occupiers at Archdale Road, which lies to the rear of the appeal site. However, they do not specify which properties they consider would be affected.
15. The appellant has demonstrated that, whilst the Archdale Road properties have more shallow gardens, the nearest rear elevation at 9 Archdale Road would be located at a separation distance of approximately 22m from the rear of the new mansard. Taking into account this evidence, which the Council have not disputed, and my observations on site, I am satisfied that the separation distance would be sufficient to preserve the outlook of occupants on Archdale Road, and to avoid an undue visual impact.
16. As a result, I conclude that there would be no conflict with SP Policy 3.2, which seeks to prevent the loss of amenity to present and future occupiers in the surrounding area.

Other Matters

17. Whilst the development may lead to an improvement of the living conditions of the occupants of the appeal property, this would be a private benefit that would not outweigh the harm I have identified. I note that no objections to the scheme have been received from neighbours, but this circumstance has not led me to a different conclusion.

Conclusion

18. Despite my finding that the development would preserve the living conditions of neighbours, it would unacceptably harm the character and appearance of the surrounding area. Taking all other matters into consideration, I therefore conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Elaine Gray

INSPECTOR