
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 1 August 2017

by Richard S Jones BA (Hons) BTP MRTPI

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

Decision date: 16 August 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/C5690/D/17/3174581
48 Belmont Hill, London SE13 5DN

- 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 and Mrs McAuliffe against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Lewisham.
 - The application Ref DC/16/098635 , dated 5 October 2016, was refused by notice dated 10 February 2017.
 - The development proposed is new dormer windows to the existing roof / loft space and new flat roof lights.
-

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary matters

2. Prior to the determination of the application, an amended design was submitted to the Council showing two dormer windows on the front roof slope rather than three. However, it was the three dormer scheme which was formally determined by the Council. Following its decision, email correspondence from the Council confirms that should an appeal be made, the Council would not object to the two dormer option being considered. I have therefore considered both options. As no objection was received from local residents to the three dormer windows, I do not consider any party would be prejudiced by me doing so.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the host dwelling and surrounding area.

Reasons

4. The appeal relates to a relatively large, detached, two storey dwelling with a hipped main roof. The existing front elevation is symmetrical in its appearance and incorporates a ground floor projection with decorated parapet wall between the ground and first floor levels. The dwelling has a grand centrally positioned front door with a decorative surround flanked by two ground floor sash windows. These are taller than the three at first floor level, which appear tightly positioned between the top of the parapet wall and the eaves line. This creates a more subservient first floor which defers to the visual emphasis given to the ground floor level.

5. The Council do not raise concern regarding the two proposed rear dormers or the flat roof lights. Although I have concerns about the introduction of gable dormers on a hipped roof dwelling, given their position to the rear of the dwelling, the harm would not be sufficient to warrant withholding of planning permission. The focus of the Council's concern therefore relates to the three dormer windows proposed for the front elevation.
6. The Council's Residential Standards Supplementary planning document (SPD) recognises that Lewisham has a wide variety of roof designs and as such it is difficult to set a series of standards. Nevertheless, some general guidelines apply, including that roof extensions, including dormer windows, to the front and side elevations will be resisted in favour of roof lights set into the roof slope.
7. I appreciate that the dormers on the front are the same as those proposed for the rear, in terms of proportions and finishing materials, which would match that of the host dwelling. I also accept that all three would be set well above the eaves line and slightly down from the main ridgeline level and would generally align with the windows below and retain the overall symmetry of the front elevation.
8. However, even though the individual proportions of the dormers are relatively modest compared to the overall roof area, they would be noticeably wider than the windows below and in combination the three would create a very busy roofscape and an undue level of visual clutter. I'm not convinced that the dormers would create a top heavy design due to the visual dominance of the ground floor base, nevertheless, they would visually compete with the primacy of the ground floor aspect and would detract from the overall composition of the front elevation. Being gable roof dormers rather than hipped dormers to match the main roof form also impedes assimilation.
9. I appreciate that efforts have been made to overcome the concerns of the Council by the alternative design comprising two front dormers. In this regard, although the overall symmetry of the dwelling would be retained, the dormers would lose their alignment with the windows below and the overall attractiveness of the architectural composition would be compromised. The gable design also remains which would contrast with the hipped main roof form and in overall terms the dormer windows would result in prominent additions to the dwelling.
10. The proposals would not therefore successfully integrate with and preserve the architectural character of the building or appear subordinate to its main front elevation. Instead, I consider both schemes would significantly change the character of host property and would be harmful to its appearance.
11. The residential character of this part of Belmont Hill is varied in design and type with large detached dwelling houses, terraced dwellings and flats. This results in a varied roofscape, although hipped roofs are a common feature. The Council explain that the front dormers at Nos 62 and 64 do not have planning permission. Although I also saw a front dormer close by at No 54 Belmont Hill, my observations are generally consistent with the Council that the majority of the properties along the road do not have front dormers.
12. I appreciate that the scale, form and positioning of the flats at Elm Court has a greater influence on the character and appearance of the street scene than that

of the appeal dwelling. However, the appeal dwelling does presently make a positive contribution to the street scene and this would be diminished by either of the appeal schemes. In this respect, the effect of the two rear dormers cannot be compared to those proposed at the front.

13. Although the appeal site falls outside of the Blackheath Conservation Area, paragraph 132 of the Framework makes clear that great weight should be given to the conservation of designated heritage assets, and to their setting. In this case, given the intervening and contrasting built form of the terrace of dwellings at Nos 50a-50c Belmont Hill, I do not consider that the proposal would materially affect the setting of the Conservation Area, which would therefore be preserved.
14. Nevertheless, I conclude that the proposal would be harmful to the character and appearance of the host dwelling and its immediate environs, contrary to the Residential Standards SPD and Development Management Local Plan Policies 30 and 31. These state, amongst other matters, that development proposals for alterations and extensions, including roof extensions will be required to be of a high, site specific, and sensitive design quality, and respect and/or complement the form, setting, period, architectural characteristics, and detailing of the original building.

Conclusion

15. For the reasons explained, and taking all other matters into consideration, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Richard S Jones

INSPECTOR