
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 11 September 2017

by G D Jones BSc(Hons) DipTP DMS MRTPI

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

Decision date: 21 September 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/E5330/D/17/3180153
2A Brookway, Blackheath SE3 9BJ

- 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 S Winton against the decision of Royal Borough of Greenwich Council.
 - The application Ref 17/0901/F, dated 20 March 2017, was refused by notice dated 26 May 2017.
 - The development proposed is the erection of a side dormer window and a rear dormer window with associated works.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The Council's evidence refers to the proposed development involving a loft conversion. However, I also note the appellant's submission that the loft has already been converted to living space, which I found to be the case when I conducted my site visit. I have considered and determined the appeal accordingly.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect that the proposed dormer windows would have on the character and appearance of the host building and the surrounding area, including whether it would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of Blackheath Park Conservation Area.

Reasons

4. The appeal property is a detached, two-storey house located in a predominantly residential area. It is also within Blackheath Park Conservation Area (the CA). The townscape and street scene of the surrounding area is characterised by reasonably substantial, attractive, varied and largely detached houses. These characteristics are reasonably typical of the wider CA.
5. The Council has produced an Appraisal document for the CA¹. It states that the special significance of the area comes from the quality and diversity of its housing, ranging from grand Georgian and Victorian villas to compact flats. From what I have read and seen during the appeal process, I agree.

¹ Blackheath Park Conservation Area Appraisal, the Royal Borough of Greenwich Council & English Heritage, 2013

6. While visiting the area I also observed dormer windows on a number of the houses. I also note the evidence submitted by both main parties in respect to development of that kind. Such dormer window development is of relevance in terms of how it has an influence on the character and appearance of the area. However, whether or not that development has been granted planning permission by the Council is of limited weight so far as my decision is concerned. This is because I do not know all of the circumstances of these other schemes and, in any event, all planning applications and appeals must be determined on their own, individual merits.
7. The dormer windows that I refer to above do have an influence on the character and appearance of the area, such that I see no 'in principle' objection to the introduction of such development to the local townscape. However, that is not to say any kind of dormer would necessarily be acceptable or that all properties in the area could acceptably accommodate such development – each would have to be assessed on their merits or otherwise.
8. In this case the proposed rear dormer would be very substantial in terms of its width, depth and height relative to the rest of the rear roof plane. Consequently, it would dominate the rear roof form and give the house a rather awkward, top heavy appearance. The fenestration of the proposed rear dormer would also be at odds with the pattern, proportions and style of the windows in the first floor rear elevation of what appears to be the original house, as well as with those of the extended ground floor. For these reasons the proposed rear dormer would be a visually awkward, incongruous addition that would have a detrimental effect on the character and appearance of the host building and the surrounding area.
9. The proposed side dormer window would be considerably smaller and of a more sympathetic overall design relative to its rear counterpart. However, it would sit reasonably high within the side hipped roof plane close to the ridge, which would also appear rather visually awkward. This adds further weight against the appeal scheme at large.
10. For all of the foregoing reasons, the appeal development would have a detrimental effect on the contribution that the appeal property makes to the significance of the CA and would fail to preserve or enhance its character or appearance. Consequently, in respect to the matters outlined above, the proposed dormer windows would conflict with Policies 7.4 (Local Character), 7.6 (Architecture) and 7.8 (Heritage Assets and Archaeology) of the London Plan 2016, Policies DH1 (Design), DH3 (Heritage Assets), DH(a) (Residential Extensions) and DH(h) (Conservation Areas) of the Royal Greenwich Local Plan: Core Strategy 2014 and with the Residential Extensions, Conversions and Basements Supplementary Planning Document 2016.
11. The resulting harm to the CA's significance would be less than substantial in the terms of para 134 of the Framework. Given the statutory duty to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area, the identified harm carries substantial weight against the proposed development.

Other Matters

12. While I note that other concerns have been raised locally, they have not altered my overall conclusion.

Conclusion

13. I recognise that there are matters that weigh in favour of the appeal development, notably that the scheme would reduce overlooking of neighbouring property and make greater use of the existing internal floor space. However, the collective weight of these benefits is insufficient to outbalance the identified *less than substantial harm* to the significance of the CA bearing in mind that such harm should be given considerable importance and weight. Consequently, the proposal does not represent sustainable development and the appeal should be dismissed.

G D Jones

INSPECTOR