
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 24 October 2017

by Christopher Thomas BSc DipTP MRTPI

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

Decision date: 14 November 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/Y3615/D/17/3180561
20 Tower Hill, Gomshall, Guildford, GU5 9LS

- 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 & Mrs R Arrow against the decision of Guildford Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 17/P/00558, dated 14 March 2017, was refused by notice dated 8 May 2017.
 - The development proposed is two storey side extension, roof conversion and alterations.
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Procedural Matters

1. The description of the proposal on the Council's decision notice was amended from that given on the application form to include reference to the two rear dormer windows and the amended drawing no. DC213/08A which was received by the Council on 3 April 2017. These matters have received publicity through the appeal process and I have taken them into account in reaching my decision.
2. The appeal site lies within the Metropolitan Green Belt, within the settlement limits of the village of Gomshall. In the officer report and in its decision notice the Council has not raised any issue with regard to the acceptability or otherwise of the proposal in relation to Green Belt policy. Rather, it has referred specifically to matters related to the proposed dormer windows. I have therefore proceeded to determine this appeal solely on that basis.

Decision

3. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for two storey side extension, roof conversion and alterations at 20 Tower Hill, Gomshall, Guildford, GU5 9LS in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref 17/P/00558, dated 14 March 2017, and the amended drawing no. DC213/08A received by the Council on 3 April 2017, subject to the following conditions:
 - 1) The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than 3 years from the date of this decision.
 - 2) The materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of the development hereby permitted shall match those used in the existing building.
 - 3) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the approved plans.

Main Issue

4. The main issue is the effect of the two proposed dormers on the character and appearance of the host building, the context and character of the adjacent buildings and the immediate surroundings.

Reasons

5. The proposed dormers form part of a broader scheme of extension to the host property, to which the Council has not raised any objection. According to the details provided by the appellants the two individual Upvc windows to be included in the dormers would have dimensions of 1800mm x 1200mm set in dormers approximately 2100mm wide by 2200mm high and projecting a maximum of 2100mm from the roof slope. The dormers would be set back from the eaves by some 500mm and set down some 1000mm/1200mm from the respective ridge levels of the existing dwelling and the proposed extension, measured in each case along the roof plane. The apron below each dormer and the side cheeks would be tile hung.
6. With regard to the effect of the proposed dormer windows on the character and appearance of the existing property, the Council's adopted Supplementary Planning Guidance: Residential Extensions (2003) [the SPG] includes, amongst other things, guidance on roof extensions. It expects loft conversions not to substantially increase the roof volume of host properties. In this instance the Council has not objected in principle to the loft conversion in the roof space of the host building or to the provision of living space within the pitched roof of the proposed extension. The SPG also expects natural light to be provided by roof lights that are flush with the roof slope. However, the guidance makes it clear that where dormer windows are proposed their acceptability should be assessed against a number of criteria.
7. Dormers are expected to reflect the vertical lines, emphasis and positioning of existing doors and windows in a host property. I note the Council has made no specific reference to these matters in its decision notice or officer report, nor to the materials in which the dormers would be constructed. Notwithstanding this however, I consider that the proposed position of the dormers on the roof in relation to other window and door openings in the proposed rear elevation, the verticality of the mullions, and the use of Upvc windows elsewhere in the property, would ensure that the dormers would not be harmful to the building's character and appearance.
8. Dormer windows, according to the SPG, should not be higher than the existing ridgeline, and I am satisfied that the proposal complies in this respect. What is of concern to the Council is that in its judgement the proposed dormers would fail to meet the SPG expectation that their size and design should be sympathetic to the existing property. In this regard, I consider that the proposed dormers would not appear unusually dominant or unsympathetic in proportion to the enlarged rear roof slope, which would be about 13m wide. In my judgement the scale of the existing property would not be unacceptably compromised by the incorporation of the proposed dormers in the scheme of enlargement at the host property.
9. I note that the SPG indicates that pitched roofs on dormer windows will normally be considered more favourably than flat roofs. However, it is not suggested that only pitched roofs would be considered acceptable. In this

case, I see no particular design requirement to insist on pitched rather flat roofed dormers. I have taken note of the appellants' appraisal of 'the vernacular of the local area' with respect to the use of flat roof dormers on a number of other properties on the Tower Hill estate, but I have given this very little weight in reaching my conclusion on this matter. Rather I have concluded that on their own merits the flat roofed dormers proposed would be an acceptable design solution in this case and that the character and appearance of the host building would not be unduly harmed.

10. With regard to the effect of the proposed dormers on the context and character of the adjacent buildings and immediate surroundings, it is clear that they would not adversely affect the street scene because of their location at the rear of the property. Accordingly, as far as any visual impact on the context and character of the locality as seen from the public domain is concerned, the immediate surroundings of the appeal site would not be adversely affected.
11. It is a fact that no other nearby house has roof dormers, although as the appellants have pointed out some other houses in the wider vicinity have had dormers built. Nevertheless, I consider that the absence of any dormers on houses in the immediate context of the appeal site should not preclude their use on the host building if, as I have concluded, they would be acceptable on design grounds, to which I attach considerable weight. Furthermore, with respect to context, I have given some weight to the fact that the Council has not argued that the proposed dormers would have any harmful effect on either of the two adjacent houses or any other nearby property by way of an adverse impact either on privacy or in any other regard. Neither of the adjacent houses looks out on to the rear of the host property and the outlook from their rear gardens would not be unduly compromised. The adjacent house at no.18, to which the appeal property is joined, has also been extended to the side and rear and I consider that the proposed extensions would therefore not be out of context or character as far as adjacent buildings are concerned.
12. Accordingly, I have concluded that the two proposed dormers would not harm the character and appearance of the host building, or the context and character of the adjacent buildings and the immediate surroundings. The proposal would not be contrary therefore to saved policy H9 (Extensions to dwellings in the countryside), in particular to parts 2 and 4 of that policy, nor to saved policy G5 (Design Code) of the Guildford Borough Local Plan 2003. The relevant section of the Council's SPG would be respected. These policies and design guidance do not conflict with the requirement for proposals that proposals should achieve high quality and inclusive design as set out in paragraph 57 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework).
13. For the reasons given I have decided to allow this appeal. A condition requiring the development to be carried out in accordance with the approved plans is necessary for the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning. A condition in respect of matching materials will protect the character and appearance of the building and safeguard visual amenity.

C Thomas

INSPECTOR