
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 14 November 2017

by Debbie Moore BSc (HONS) MCD MRTPI PGDip

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

Decision date: 23RD November 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/G5180/W/17/3180268

4 Mill Place, Chislehurst, Kent BR7 5ND

- 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 Alexander against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Bromley.
 - The application Ref DC/17/01977/FULL1, dated 15 May 2017, was refused by notice dated 4 July 2017.
 - The development proposed is described on the application form as "loft conversion".
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for a loft conversion at 4 Mill Place, Chislehurst, Kent BR7 5ND in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref DC/17/01977/FULL1, dated 15 May 2017, subject to the following conditions:
 - 1) The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than three years from the date of this decision.
 - 2) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: Site Location Plan; Existing Layout Ref 586-01; and Proposed Layout Ref 586-02.
 - 3) No development shall commence until details / samples of the materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of the extension hereby permitted have been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. Development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details / samples.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the development on the character and appearance of the host building and the wider area, in particular, the Chislehurst Conservation Area.

Reasons

3. The appeal property comprises one of a pair of semi-detached dwellings, which accommodates two flats. The loft conversion relates to the upper floor flat. It would involve a rear dormer extension, which would extend across the full width of the property, in addition to a rooflight on the front facing roofslope and a window in the upper gable.

4. The appeal property is a relatively modern building, constructed from brick and render with concrete roof tiles. It is located within the Chislehurst Conservation Area, facing towards an open common. The Council's Supplementary Planning Guidance for the Conservation Area (SPG) explains that the area has a wooded, semi-rural character with extensive coverage by mature trees; woodland and open grassed areas. The appeal site is located between Old Hill and Summer Hill, which is described as having a strong village character containing a dense cluster of mainly nineteenth century buildings. The significant features of this part of the Conservation Area are the 'organic' nature of the development, the diverse mixture of building styles and the extensive woodland. The irregular frontage to the common is mentioned specifically as being particularly attractive.
5. The SPG states that dormer windows and rooflights will be considered against the individual circumstances of each building, although installation on locations visible from public spaces is not usually considered appropriate. Furthermore, the scale should respond to traditional styles and avoid adversely impacting on the appearance of the building and the Conservation Area.
6. The rear dormer window would be relatively large as it would extend across the full width of the roof. However, it has been designed to break up the mass of its appearance with a central area set back from the eaves and incorporating a pitched roof. Crucially, the dormer would not be on a prominent front or side roofline. During my site visit I saw that views of the dormer from public spaces would be limited, although it would be possible to obtain a partial view of the side of the dormer from the common. I also noted that the neighbouring property has dormer windows at the rear and these are not visible in the wider area. Although there are gardens of other properties to the rear of Mill Place, the length of the gardens and intervening vegetation limits views towards the appeal property. The dormer would be visible from the rear gardens of the adjoining properties on Mill Place, but its impact would be limited as it would not be in the direct line of sight.
7. The Council is concerned that the extension would conflict with the simple uniform character of the property, and it would appear incongruous when viewed in the context of Nos 1 to 8. However, the principal elevation fronting onto the common would only be affected marginally by the insertion of a single rooflight. The rear dormer would not increase the prominence of the property as it would not be widely visible. I appreciate that the dormer would be large, but I do not agree that it would adversely affect the visual integrity of the host property, due to its relatively inconspicuous location. Also, the irregular layout and form of the settlement, which is considered to be part of the area's significance, would be retained, as would the development frontage to the common.
8. I have considered the effect on the neighbouring property, Summerhill Lodge, which is a locally listed building and considered to be a non-designated heritage asset. This is an imposing building occupying a prominent location. In contrast, Nos 1 to 8 Mill Place are sited at a lower level, and the buildings are more modest and low key. The extension would be at the rear of No 4 and it would not be viewed in the context of the nearby locally listed building. Consequently, the significance of the locally listed building, which is attributed to its architectural detailing and the contribution it makes to the street scene, would not be adversely affected.

9. I conclude that the development would not have an adverse effect on the street scene or the visual amenity of the wider area. The dormer would be sited away from prominent roof pitches and its size and design would be appropriate to the host property, in accordance with Policy H8 of the Unitary Development Plan 2006 (UDP) and Policy 6 of the emerging Local Plan.¹ The development would not have an adverse effect on the characteristics that contribute to the significance of the heritage assets in the vicinity, and the character and appearance of the Conservation Area would be preserved, in accordance with Policy BE11 of the UDP and Policy 41 of the emerging Local Plan. The development would accord with Policy BE1 of the UDP and Policy 37 of the emerging Local Plan, which seek to ensure development is of a high quality design and respects non-designated heritage assets.

Other Matters

10. A neighbour has expressed concern that the extension would prevent a similar development at the adjoining property, as it would be close to the party wall. The dormer would be located within the roof of the appeal property and there is no evidence to suggest that it would inhibit other similar development.

Conditions

11. In addition to the standard time limit condition, I have imposed a condition to specify the approved plans as this provides certainty. I have imposed a condition requiring details of materials to be approved to ensure the development complements the appearance of the host building and the Conservation Area.

Conclusion

12. I conclude that the development would preserve the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.
13. For the reasons given above, the appeal is allowed.

Debbie Moore

Inspector

¹ Proposed Submission Draft Local Plan