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## Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 13 November 2019

**by I A Dyer BSc (Eng) MIHT**

**an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State**

**Decision date: 26 November 2019**

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**Appeal Ref: APP/C5690/D/19/3235485**

**23 Oakcroft Road, Blackheath, London SE13 7ED**

- 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 V Nagala against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Lewisham.
  - The application Ref DC/19/111472, dated 14 March 2019, was refused by notice dated 24 May 2019.
  - The development proposed is described as "Construction of a single storey extension to the rear with a sloping roof that would incorporate six rooflights and sliding patio doors. Construction of a two storey extension at first floor and loft level would be set back from boundary line by 1m. Creation of two dormers to the rear roof pitch. New bay window to front elevation with overhang mono pitch roof projecting above existing entrance door. Chimney stack removal and installation of roof light. New window at ground floor level to western elevation".
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### Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

### Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the surrounding area and the site with particular reference to Blackheath Conservation Area (the CA), which is a designated heritage asset.

### Reasons

3. Oakcroft Road, which is within the CA, is an established residential area of predominantly two to three storey houses of varying design, but with some flatted development. To the west of the appeal site is a flat roofed two storey house of recent design, whilst to the east lies an older dwelling with accommodation on three floors with a pitched roof.
4. The wider area is characterised by substantial Victorian and Edwardian dwellings of traditional materials and detailing and 23 Oakcroft Road, and its neighbour to the west, being of more modern design, are somewhat at odds with this. As such No 23 has a neutral effect on the CA.
5. The character and appearance of the CA in the immediate vicinity of the appeal site is defined by residential streets of houses of varying designs, set in mature gardens, but predominated by substantial Victorian and Edwardian houses constructed of traditional materials in period style. This gives the area a quiet, leafy, settled feeling.

### *Roof alterations*

6. The dwelling currently has a clay tile pitched roof with a projecting rear gable. The ridge of the roof would be raised to provide additional space within the roof. Given the variance in roof styles and levels, and the local topography I do not find that raising the height of the ridge would, of itself, have an unacceptable effect on the character and appearance of the building or the area within which it sits.
7. The proposal would remove the rear gable and introduce two metal clad dormers to the rear elevation. These would be set down below the proposed ridge height, and in from the end gables of the dwelling and this would provide a degree of subservience. However, this would be undermined by the scale of the combined dormers.
8. Whilst some properties in the area have rear dormers, these are of a more modest scale in comparison to the roofs within which they sit. The proposed dormers would occupy a significant area of the rear roof slope of No 23 and would be visible from adjacent rear gardens and from the street. I therefore consider that such an addition would be a dominant addition to the roof structure, out of keeping with roof forms in the vicinity, and would result in harm to the character and appearance of the CA and the site.

### *Other Extensions*

9. The proposal would add a single storey rear extension to the ground floor of the dwelling. However, this extension would reflect the rear projection of the garage and, whilst likely to be visible from neighbouring properties, would not be noticeable from the public realm and so, in isolation this element would not have an unacceptable effect on the character and appearance of the CA or the site.
10. The proposal would also extend the dwelling to the east, above the existing garage. Whilst the garage is set back slightly from the frontage, reinforcing its subservience to the host dwelling, no such set back is shown on the drawings and this, together with the extension of the roof ridge on the same level as that of the main part of the roof, presents the extension as an enlargement of the structure with no subservience or reference to the form of the original building.
11. Together with the changes to fenestration on the front elevation, the construction of a porch and bay window, removal of a chimney stack and rendering of the brickwork result in a radical alteration to the front face of the building.
12. Whilst the dwelling in its existing form makes a neutral contribution to the character and appearance of the CA, and some of the proposed features reflect elements in the design of neighbouring properties, the significant enlargement of a window straddling two floors and the lack of alignment between windows on ground and first floor would appear awkward and incongruous on the street façade.
13. I therefore conclude that the side extension, together with the resultant changes to the front façade of the building would appear awkward and incongruous on the street façade and, in this instance, that would be so substantial as to constitute harm to the character and appearance of the CA and the site.

14. In combination, the side, rear and roof extensions would significantly increase the bulk and massing of the building. This would be noticeable both from the street and from the rear windows and gardens of neighbouring properties. This together with the design of the fenestration on the front facade is so awkward and incongruous as to constitute harm to the character and appearance of the area and the site.
15. I conclude that the proposed development would have a harmful effect on the character and appearance of the site and the surrounding area contrary to Policies 7.4, 7.6 and 7.8 of the London Plan (2016), Policies 15 and 16 of the Lewisham Core Strategy (2011) and DM Policies 30, 31 and 36 of the Lewisham Development Management Local Plan (2014) which, taken together and amongst other things, requires that development, including extensions, should be of a high, site specific and sensitive design quality in relation to the original building and its context, including its relationship to heritage assets, and that roof extensions, in particular, should not be obtrusive in long views from public spaces.
16. The proposal would also be contrary to the guidance provided in Section 5.8 of the Alterations and Extensions Supplementary Planning Document (2019) which, amongst other things, advises that a rear roof extension should not be visible from the street frontage and, in conservation areas, should be of exceptional design quality.
17. The site lies within the CA. As such I have a statutory duty to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the CA. In addition, Paragraph 193 of the Framework requires that when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation.
18. The statutory duty in Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 is a matter of considerable importance and weight. As a consequence of the design and appearance of the proposal it would have a harmful impact on the Conservation Area. However, I find that the harm would be less than substantial.
19. Paragraph 196 of the revised Framework directs that where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal. The proposal would provide short-term support for the construction industry. However, the scale of development is limited and so this public benefit would not outweigh the harm to the designated heritage asset that I have found in this instance.

### **Other Matters**

20. The appellant has expressed dissatisfaction with the way in which the Council handled both the pre-application and application stages of his proposal. However, this is a matter between the appellant and the Council.

## **Conclusion**

21. For the reasons given above, and having regard to all other matters raised, the appeal should be dismissed.

*I Dyer*

INSPECTOR