
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 19 November 2019

by K A Taylor MSC URP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: Thursday, 12 December 2019

Appeal Ref: APP/C5690/W/19/3236567

4 Howard Court, Blackheath Hill, Greenwich, London SE10 8AF

- 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 & Ms McIlrath & Landrock against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Lewisham.
 - The application Ref DC/18/110135, dated 12 December 2018, was refused by notice dated 1 April 2019.
 - The development proposed is a roof level extension, raising of section of existing ridge and formation of full width dormer to rear pitch. Installation of two roof windows to front pitch.
-

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is whether the proposed development effects the character and appearance of the host building and the wider roofscape.

Reasons

3. The appeal site is a maisonette situated in the upper centre of a small block of 6 maisonettes. Due to the topography of the area the appeal site is positioned within a prominent location along Blackheath Hill. The site is adjacent to the Blackheath Conservation Area (CA) and is identified as sub area 3, in the CA character appraisal¹. The proposed development would involve the creation of a rear dormer by raising the existing ridge height and incorporate two roof lights to the front elevation.
4. Policy 31 of the Lewisham local development framework, Development Management Local Plan, 2014 (DMLP) sets out how to achieve good quality and well-designed alterations and extensions to buildings. It states that rear extensions will generally not be permitted where any part is higher than the height of the ridge of the main roof. This is also supported by the Council's Residential Standards Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) 2006 (updated 2012), which also advises that roof extensions should be sensitively designed to retain the architectural integrity of the building and rear roof extensions

¹ Blackheath Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Supplementary Planning Document, Adopted 14 March 2007

should be set back from the eaves and set in from the gable, flank or party wall boundary.

5. The maisonette is located centrally within the block and the rear dormer would occupy the whole of the rear roof slope for the maisonette, it would not be set back from the eaves or set in from party walls and would be of an excessive size and bulk appearing as a large and overly dominant box, of which would not be good quality design. The raising of the ridge height would result in a projection above the existing main roof line at both sides and would appear as an incongruous addition to the detriment of the host building and the unity of the wider roofscape. Whilst, the inappropriate use of rendered cladding materials would appear at odds with the existing materials on the roof itself.
6. As I saw on my site visit, the rear of the site is particularly open and views of the rear elevation can be seen due to the reduction in tree coverage, which would be the case during the autumn/winter months and due to the topography of the area. It would result in the dormer being highly visible on the host building due to its excessive scale, height and poor design. As such, it would cause harm to the visual characteristics and form of the wider roofscape of which the appeal site forms part of, when viewed from the rear.
7. For the reasons given above, I conclude that the proposed development would harm the character and appearance of the host building and wider roofscape. It would be contrary to Policy 15 of the Lewisham local development framework Core Strategy, Development plan document 2011 and Policies 30 and 31 of the DMLP 2014, which together seek high quality design that responds to local context and character; and requires roof extensions to be sensitive design quality, and respect and/or complement the form, setting, architectural characteristics and detailing of the original building. It would also be at odds with the guidance contained within the Council's SPD, relating to roof extensions.

Other Matters

8. The CA is characterised by good quality mid to late Victorian terraced housing and has a very high degree of quality in its built form and survival of original features and materials. Houses are 2 ½ storey with dormers and relatively recent mansard additions which disrupt the original scale of terraced houses. The CA character appraisal sets out that a number of houses on Blackheath Hill are in a very poor state of repair, which has generally diminished the appearance of the group which is an important entrance to the CA and is further diminished by heavy traffic.
9. I note that the Council has not raised any concerns over the proximity of the appeal proposal to the CA. Furthermore, it would have limited views from within the CA itself, particularly due to the scale and form of the immediate built development around the site, as such it would not alter the character and surroundings of the CA. I therefore find that it would preserve the character and appearance of the conservation area.
10. I acknowledge the appellants' desire to enlarge the property and that the proposal would provide better ventilation, reduce noise and improve sleeping conditions. Nonetheless, these are largely personal matters and do not outweigh the concerns that I have raised above.

11. I have been referred to other developments in the area. However, I do not have full details of these and so cannot be certain that the circumstances are comparable in order to justify the development before me. In any case I have considered the appeal proposal on its own.

Conclusion

12. Having regard to all matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

K A Taylor

INSPECTOR