



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 7 January 2020

by Robert Hitchcock BSc DipCD MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 23 January 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/L5810/W/19/3238226
24A Vicarage Road, Hampton Wick KT1 4ED

- 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 Mehul Ruparelia against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Richmond-upon-Thames.
 - The application Ref 19/1503/FUL, dated 11 May 2019, was refused by notice dated 3 July 2019.
 - The development proposed is a loft conversion with rear facing dormer.
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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 locality.

Reasons

3. Vicarage Road is a suburban street presenting several distinct phases of development along its length which results in a mix of property types and designs. Dwellings are set behind front garden areas generally bordered by walls and fences. Sections of the road include consistently styled properties including large Victorian villas and later Edwardian houses. These distinct sections are interwoven with individually styled properties.
4. Whilst development along the road generally presents as two storey, there are variations in building heights and various roof forms present. However, where buildings are relatively closely spaced, the roof forms are fully or partially hipped or have their main ridges perpendicular to the road. This emphasis of the building spacing forms a strong characteristic of the Vicarage Road streetscene.
5. The appeal site is part of a semi-detached, post-war, infill property that has been divided into flats. The semi-pair is unique in its design within the road and features a low spreading fully hipped roof form.
6. The proposed loft conversion includes the formation of a roof extension that would significantly extend the existing ridge of the semi-pair to form a new side gable. The effect of the ridge extension and significant increase in the area of the forward roof slope would contrast sharply with the existing roof form, add significant visual mass to the building and unbalance the character of the semi pair that currently has a high degree of symmetry.

7. The Council's Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (2013) (SPD) advises that the conversion of an *existing hip roof into a gabled roof is not desirable and will not be encouraged. This is especially so when the roof-scape and space between the buildings are important features of the character of that part of the street; and there is symmetry with the adjoining semi-detached property.*
8. The development would result in a gable the would align with the side elevation of the building but retain the existing projecting eaves detail. Whilst this would assist in breaking up the perception of the overall mass of the side elevation, the combined area of the new gable and side cheek of the flat-roofed dormer would present as a large addition to the roof. Despite the fact that most of this would be contained behind the resultant front roof slope, the extension would significantly reduce the gap between the roof of the appeal site and the neighbouring pair of semis at 20 and 22 Vicarage Road.
9. Both nos.20 and 22 have extended their roofs considerably. The extensions at no.22 have resulted in the substantial loss of its fully hipped roof such that the sense of separation between the semi-pairs has already been reduced. The effect of the proposal would be such that the gap would be further reduced and significantly undermine the sense of space about and between the consecutive buildings. This would jar with the existing arrangement of development and the characteristic spaces between roofs in the locality.
10. To the rear, the scale of development would be observable from within nearby residential gardens and within the two-storey return of the attached semi. Here it would be seen within the context of a greater diversity in roof additions and would not, therefore, appear incongruous from this aspect.
11. Whilst I observed that there are other examples of combined hip to gable and dormer roof extensions in the locality, as highlighted by the appellant, these are in the minority. Notwithstanding those examples and the support for the use of airspace above existing residential properties for new homes in the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework), the existence of development elsewhere does not represent an appropriate reason to find in favour of a proposal that would cause harm. Precedent is rarely an argument that should carry great weight in planning decisions which should be made on their own merits in the context of the development plan and other material considerations. These examples do not, therefore, lead me to alter my findings on this issue.
12. For the above reasons, I conclude that the development would fail to reflect or preserve the character and appearance of the locality and conflicts with Policies LP1 and LP8 of the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames Local Plan (2018), the SPD and the Framework, as they seek to achieve high quality design that preserves the character and appearance of locations.

Other Matters

13. I am directed to the economic benefits arising from the construction of the proposed extensions and the social benefits of providing improved living conditions for a growing family. Whilst acknowledging the benefits that would result in this respect, these are not sufficient to outweigh the harm that I have identified.

14. The absence of objection by the Council as to any effect on nearby living conditions or the proposed external finishes do not comprise benefits in favour of the proposed development.

Conclusion

15. For the above reasons, I conclude the appeal should be dismissed.

R Hitchcock

INSPECTOR