The Planning Inspectorate

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 28 January 2020

by David Cross BA(Hons) PgDip(Dist) TechIOA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 18 February 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/N5660/D/19/3240062
54 Ferndene Road, London SE24 0AB

- 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 Thomas Halahan against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Lambeth.
- The application Ref 19/01651/FUL, dated 7 May 2019, was refused by notice dated 5 August 2019.
- The development proposed is erection of a rear dormer extension and the installation of 2 front roof lights plus 1 side roof light (retrospective).

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matter

2. The description of the development provided on the planning application form has been replaced by an amended version on the decision notice and in subsequent appeal documents. I consider that subsequent description to be more concise and I have therefore used it within this decision.

Background and Main Issue

3. I saw that the development had commenced and appeared to be substantially complete. Although the development includes rooflights, the Council's reason for refusal refers solely to the rear dormer extension and its effect on character and appearance. Having regard to the Council's decision and based upon what I have seen and read, I will concentrate on the effect of the rear dormer in my decision.

4. On that basis, the main issue in this appeal is the effect of the rear dormer extension on the character and appearance of the host property and the surrounding area.

Reasons

5. The appeal property is one of a pair of semi-detached dwellings located in a pleasant suburban area which contains a mixture of housing designs. The rear dormer consists of two elements set on the main rear roofslope of the original dwelling as well as on the rear roofslope of a side extension. I saw that due to the bulk and scale of the dormer projecting over a significant area of the

roofslope, it appears as an obtrusive and incongruous feature which has an overdominant effect on the rear of the property and its immediate neighbour.

6. The contrived shape of the dormer consisting of two box-like extensions of differing sizes adds to this unfortunate appearance, as does the use of zinc cladding which does not reflect the more traditional roofing materials of the host property or its neighbours. The differing design and materials of the dormer's windows compared to those on the first floor also exacerbates the visual harm arising from the proposal.

7. I acknowledge that the dormer reflects materials used on a rear ground floor extension. However, this extension is distinctly separate from the dormer and does not set an overriding visual context for extensions at roof level. The step-back in the dormer also does little to reflect the step-back in the rear elevation of the dwelling and this does not justify the awkward appearance arising from the differing sized elements of the dormer.

8. I am mindful that the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) refers to allowing a suitable degree of variety and not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change. However, the dormer is not of a particularly innovative design and does not appear as a suitable or appropriate feature in this location.

9. I saw that there are a variety of dormers and other features on the rear roofslopes of dwellings in the vicinity of the site, as well as a variety of other roof alterations. However, the dormers that I saw were of a more understated and sympathetic appearance compared to the awkward design of the appeal proposal, and even within this varied roofscape the appeal proposal appears as an overdominant and clumsy addition to the host building.

10. Due to its location to the rear of the building, the dormer is not readily visible, if at all, from the public realm. However, it will be clearly visible from the rear gardens of nearby properties. The lack of objection from neighbours does not lead me to a different conclusion on the visual harm arising from the proposal. Similarly, the fact that the property is not in a conservation area also does not detract from the harm I have identified.

11. I have had regard to the fall-back position as referred to by the appellant. However, whilst it may be possible to build a dormer with similar design features as the appeal proposal under the property's permitted development rights, the evidence suggests that this would be materially smaller. I therefore consider that this does not justify the bulk and scale of the appeal proposal, even allowing for the disruption that may arise from alterations to comply with permitted development rights.

12. I saw that the rooflights will not lead to harm to character and appearance, but this does not outweigh my concerns in respect of the rear dormer.

13. I conclude that due to its scale, bulk, design and siting that the rear dormer will lead to undue harm to the character and appearance of the host building and the surrounding area. The proposal will therefore be contrary to the design aims of Policies Q5 and Q11 of the Lambeth Local Plan 2015. The proposal will also conflict with the Framework with regards to achieving well-designed places. Furthermore, the proposal will be contrary to the advice of

the Council's Building Alterations & Extensions Supplementary Planning Document 2015 with regards to irregularly shaped and large box dormers.

14. For the reasons given above, and taking account of all material planning considerations, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

David Cross

INSPECTOR