The Planning Inspectorate

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 10 November 2020

by R Bartlett PGDip URP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 20 November 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/M1520/D/3252464
10 Leighfields, Thundersley, Benfleet, SS7 3UH

- 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 Ms D Angerstein against the decision of Castle Point Borough Council.
- The application Ref 20/0063/FUL, dated 29 January 2020, was refused by notice dated 13 March 2020.
- The development proposed is a loft conversion with front and rear dormers.

Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for a loft conversion with front and rear dormers at 10 Leighfields, Thundersley, Benfleet, SS7 3UH in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref 20/0063/FUL, dated 29 January 2020, subject to the following conditions:

   1) The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than 3 years from the date of this decision.

   2) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: Drawing Number 03 Revision C.

   3) Notwithstanding the materials labelled on the approved drawing, the front and side walls of the front dormer extension shall be finished in a hanging tile to match the colour of the roof tiles or a neutral coloured cladding to match the colour of the render on the dwelling and the adjacent front dormers at 6 and 8 Leighfields.

Procedural Matters

2. Since the appeal proposal was refused the council has granted a certificate of lawful development for a hip to gable loft conversion including a rear dormer extension, which is larger than that proposed on the scheme before me, and a roof light to the front. As these works were nearing completion at the time of my site visit, I have focussed my decision on the proposed front dormer extension.

Main Issues

3. The main issues are i) the effect of the front dormer extension on the character and appearance of the appeal property and its surroundings and ii) whether occupants of the resultant larger dwelling would have sufficient outdoor space.

Reasons

Character and appearance

4. The appeal property is a semi-detached bungalow. The adjoining property (no.12) has roof lights to the front and a large flat roof dormer to the rear, which is finished in an off white/cream coloured render. As a result of planning permission being refused, an alternative permitted development scheme has commenced on the appeal property, altering the half hip to a gable and adding a large rear dormer. The symmetry of this pair of semi-detached bungalows has therefore already been somewhat diminished.

5. Nos 4, 6 and 8 Leighfields all have large flat roof front and rear dormers as do many other similar semi-detached bungalows on Leighfields and on the adjacent streets of Greenleas and Kingshawes. Other front dormer windows in the area are of similar scale and design to that proposed on the appeal site and comprise a mixture of materials including cladding, render and hanging tiles in a variety of colours. The symmetry, in terms of materials, fenestration and original roof forms between other pairs of semi-detached dwellings in the immediate surrounding area has clearly not been maintained.

6. The reason for refusal relates specifically to the front dormer, stating that its size and the use of cladding on the dormer cheeks would be detrimental to the character and appearance of the appeal property and the visual amenity of the surrounding area. In the absence of any other large front dormer windows in the area I may have been minded to agree with this. However, the fact is large flat roof dormers and the use of cladding are very much part of the character and appearance of the area and as such the proposal would not detract from this.

7. The Residential Design Guidance Supplementary Planning document (SPD) (adopted January 2013) is a material consideration. It advises that the roof design of new development should be compatible with the host dwelling but also that it should be informed by the prevailing character of the area and surrounding forms of roof development. Whilst the proposal may be considered to repeat poor forms of development and to unbalance a pair of dwellings this must be balanced against the fact that introducing a smaller or multiple smaller pitched roof dormers to the front of the dwelling, as suggested in the SPD, would further detract from the scale and design of other roof extensions in the immediate area.

8. The front dormer would not fill the front roof plane or project above the ridge line. The SPD advises materials should integrate with or complement primarily the dwelling but also those present in the surrounding streetscene. In this respect, as I have already noted, the streetscene comprises a mixture of dormer materials. The host dwelling comprises a mix of brick and render. As such the use of a neutral, light coloured cladding on the dormer walls would match the walls of the dwelling, would be in keeping with other nearby dormer extensions and would result in a modern finish.

9. I therefore conclude that although the front dormer would be in partial conflict with the advice set out in the SPD, it would not be contrary to policy EC2 of the Castle Point Borough Council Local Plan (1998), which seeks to ensure, amongst other things, that the scale, design and external materials of any development are appropriate to its setting and would not harm the character of

its surroundings. I also find no conflict with paragraph 127 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework).

Outdoor Space

10. There is some disagreement between the parties regarding the number of habitable rooms in the dwelling and the amount of usable garden space available. However, given that the dwelling has now been increased under permitted development rights and that the addition of a front dormer would not alter the number of rooms, this is somewhat irrelevant. The dwelling despite being increased in size would remain a 2 or 3 bedroom dwelling.

11. I observed on my site visit that the rear garden, despite being small had a patio area with outdoor seating and a barbeque area, a washing line, children's play equipment, a shed, a larger outbuilding and a lawned area. As such it is clear that the garden provides adequate safe and private outdoor space for a couple or small family. Should the existing or any future occupants require additional space they would have the option of removing one or both of the outbuildings. On balance the garden is considered to remain commensurate to the size of the dwelling. The appellant has also pointed out that there is public open space available nearby that can be used for outdoor activities requiring a greater level space.

12. I therefore conclude that the addition of a front dormer would not increase the dwelling to such an extent that it would have an insufficient area of usable outdoor space to meet the needs of existing or future occupiers. I find no conflict with the SPD or with paragraph 127(f) of the Framework in this respect.

Conclusion

13. For the reasons given above and having had regard to all matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should be allowed.

Rachael Bartlett

INSPECTOR