



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 8 July 2021

by **P. D. Biggers** BSc Hons MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 26 July 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/W5780/D/21/3268044

15 Cleveland Road, South Woodford, London E18 2AN.

- 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 Lomax against the decision of the London Borough of Redbridge Council.
 - The application 3201/20, dated 17 September 2020, was refused by notice dated 13 November 2020.
 - The development proposed is L shaped loft extension.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matters

2. The site visit had been arranged initially for 18 May 2021 but due to an administrative oversight the appellant was not present to arrange access when I arrived at the site. As the neighbour was present at No 17 I asked if it would be possible to view the development from their rear garden. The patio area of the garden to No 17 afforded a very good view of the roofs the subject of the proposed development at No 15 but, when the appellant was notified of the visit, he opted to request a return site visit when he could be present. This took place on 8 July 2021. I can confirm that on the visit on 18 May, other than explaining the reason for the access request to the neighbour, no further discussion took place regarding the proposed development.
3. In the period since the appeal was submitted the Government has published the revised *National Planning Policy Framework* (the Framework) July 2021 which is being brought into immediate effect for the purposes of decision-making. I have considered the appeal in the light of the revised Framework but am satisfied that none of the amendments to the Framework raise issues relevant to the appeal and importantly none has brought me to any different conclusion on the appeal.

Main Issue

4. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the host building at 15 Cleveland Road and the surrounding area.

Reasons

Character and Appearance

5. The appeal site is located on the east side of Cleveland Road, an attractive tree lined street of mainly 2 storeyed, traditional, semi-detached and detached housing built in brick, under mainly slated roofs.

6. No 15 is one of a semi-detached pair with No 13 and both feature a prominent full height, gabled, rectangular bay window.
7. The front roof slopes to Cleveland Road are largely unaltered although a number do feature front rooflights lighting loft accommodation as now proposed at No 15. The rear elevations to the properties in Cleveland Road, however, have seen considerable alteration and adaptation and a number, including No 13 adjoining the appeal property, have full width, or close to full width, box dormers. However, none on the east side of the road has the large L shaped dormer arrangement proposed at No 15 where the box dormer would extend onto the roof of the rear offshoot.
8. I have been referred to No 18 Cleveland Road which has a similar form of rear dormer extension, visible from a nearby garage court, and which the appellant considers justifies the proposal at No 15. I do not have the details of this development before me but, in any event, having viewed the impact of the finished result on No 18 during the site visit, I am not persuaded that it is a design that should be replicated elsewhere. I will therefore determine the proposal at No 15 on its own merits.
9. The proposal for the main dormer would extend the whole width of the main roof slope between the roof copings. Whilst it has been put to me that the dormer would be set down from the roof and up from the eaves this would be by minimal amounts and the effect would be that the dormer would dominate the whole roof slope and would not be subordinate to it.
10. The Council has produced the *Housing Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document* (SPD) which provides guidance for householders considering extensions, including roof extensions. The guide makes it clear that this type of extension can have a significant impact on character. The advice in the SPD states that "*dormer windows or roof extensions must remain subordinate within the roof slope. Rear dormers should be symmetrically located and be at least 0.5m below the ridge of the roof, 1m above the eaves and set in 1m from shared boundary and from the edge of the roof*". None of these guidelines would be met by the proposed design for the main part of the dormer. However, I acknowledge that this is also true of many of the box dormers already in place in Cleveland Road and, in particular, that on the adjoining property (No 13). Looking at the properties in the area and the dormers that are visible there are many similar to what is proposed for the main roof at No 15 and in that respect large rear dormers are a feature of the area's characteristics. Nevertheless, no attempt has been made to reflect the SPD guidelines and no justification as to why the design does not propose a more subservient dormer.
11. Even if I were to accept the scale of the dormer on the main roof, the combination of this with the adjoining dormer onto the rear offshoot roof would result in an unacceptable development for the following reasons.
12. Even though the dormer accommodating the ensuite steps down from the main dormer it extends out more than half the length of the rear offshoot as far as the chimney stack (about 3.4 metres) and introduces significant mass and bulk at a high level in a top-heavy design. This would completely dominate the off shoot and fundamentally alter the character of the building. Designing the dormer to extend onto the offshoot roof at all would be a poor design decision in the context of the existing house and I am therefore not persuaded by the appellant's argument that terminating the dormer at the chimney stack ensures it would be subservient to the offshoot. The combination of the two dormers into one 'L' shaped extension would be out of scale with the main house and at odds with the pattern of

development in the area where generally, with the exception of No 18, the rear offshoot roofs remain subservient to the main house and are largely unaltered.

13. It is accepted that the 'L' shaped dormer extension would not be visible from the street, the gap between No 15 and 17 being very narrow. Nevertheless, it would be visible from adjacent private gardens and, in any event, I am not persuaded that the fact that the development would not be seen should ever be a justification for poor design.
14. With respect to the change to the front elevation to install rooflights, although I note that front rooflights are not prevalent in the street there are some and the SPD indicates that front rooflights would normally be allowed. Nevertheless, the fact that this element of the proposal would be acceptable would not outweigh the harm to character and appearance identified above.
15. The Framework at paragraph 130 (previously para. 127) requires that developments must be visually attractive and sympathetic to local character to create high quality buildings and spaces amongst other things and in these respects the proposal fails. The *Redbridge Local Plan* (RLP) at Policy LP26 reflects the Framework in requiring development to respect local character and make a positive architectural contribution to its location. Similarly, Policy LP30 dealing with household extensions requires that proposals complement the character of the building and incorporate a roof profile sympathetic to the existing form. For the above reasons the design of the proposal would conflict with these policies.
16. As already stated, to assist in the implementation of these design policies the Council has produced the SPD which has not been followed in this case and whilst it is only guidance it is underpinned by the policies of the RLP and is a material consideration.
17. For the reasons above, the design objectives of Policies LP26 and LP30 and the SPD would not be achieved by this proposal and it would be unacceptable in terms of the impacts on the character and appearance of No 15 and of the surroundings on Cleveland Road.

Other Matters

18. I understand the appellant's wish to make sustainable and effective use of housing land by the proposed dormer roof extension, an objective which is encouraged by the Framework in Section 11. I acknowledge that this national policy objective makes the principle of extension and enlargement to properties acceptable. However, paragraph 124 (previously para. 122) in the same section of the Framework states that this should not be at the expense of maintaining an area's prevailing character and setting. Sustainable and effective use of the dwelling would not therefore outweigh the harm to the character and appearance of the host dwelling as a result of the proposal.
19. I note that the council raises no concerns regarding the impact of the proposal on the amenity of neighbouring properties but, even if I were to agree that the scale of the dormer extension would not be overbearing on the immediately adjacent garden area of No 17, this in itself would not outweigh the harm identified above.

Conclusion

20. In reaching my decision I have had regard to the matters before me but, for the reasons, above the appeal should be dismissed.

P. D. Biggers INSPECTOR