
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 14 July 2021

by R Jones BA(Hons)DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 09 August 2021.

Appeal Ref: APP/K3605/D/21/3272211

40 Church Walk, Thames Ditton KT7 0NW

- 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 D Jones against the decision of Elmbridge Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 2020/2822, dated 23 October 2020, was refused by notice dated 7 January 2021.
 - The development proposed is loft conversion with rear dormer and side and front rooflight windows.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matter

2. I saw from my site visit that although the application was not made retrospectively, the dormer extension has been constructed. I have accordingly assessed the appeal on this basis.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the rear dormer extension on the character and appearance of the host dwelling and the Thames Ditton Conservation Area.

Reasons

4. No.40 Church Walk (No.40) is a two-storey semi-detached Victorian house located on the north-west side of Church Walk within the Thames Ditton Conservation Area (CA). In accordance with the statutory duty imposed by section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, I am required to have special regard to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character and appearance of the CA. This part of the Thames Ditton CA is characterised by the narrow path of Church Walk and the gable fronted pairs of semi-detached houses that face it, finished in attractive yellow London stock brick with red brick detailing. There is an overall uniformity to the front elevation of these houses; individually and as a group their character positively contributes to the significance of the CA.
5. To the rear of No.40 is a lane that provides access to the gardens and parking for houses facing Church Walk. This is adjoined by a graveyard connected to the church of St Nicholas. It is understood that the lane is not a public footpath but I saw from my site visit that it does provide informal pedestrian access

from Church Walk and Church Lane to St Nicholas Road. There are therefore public views of the rear of houses facing Church Walk from both this lane and the graveyard where there are reasonable gaps or breaks in the landscaped boundary. I acknowledge that some of the original uniform pattern of the rear elevations of Church Walk has been lost over the years through incremental alterations and extensions which is not untypical for Victorian houses. However, in this case I saw that the original double staggered gables and hipped roofs remain legible and there is a cohesive composition to the rear elevation that I find positively contributes to the CA.

6. The rear dormer extension to No.40 extends across the whole rear section of the roof with the elevation finished with a shear face. Whilst I appreciate the design seeks to try and 'hide' the dormer within the slope of the existing 2-storey side extension, the result is that it entirely alters the appearance of the rear elevation, dominating the roof and reading as a true second floor rather than accommodation within the roofspace. Although shown on the Proposed Elevations drawing (ref. TS2020/09-03) as set back from the edge of the larger of the two rear gables, the very minimal set back I saw on site means that the legibility of the characteristic double gable is all but lost. The scale of the dormer overwhelms the original gable features and composition of the host dwelling, appearing incongruous and contrived.
7. The window to the dormer is shown on the Proposed Elevations drawing as aligning with the first-floor window below. However, the window has been built with a slight offset and the detailing differs in that the window surround is wider than the existing windows below. This detailing, combined with the shear face design of the dormer, is unsympathetic to the host dwelling despite the use of matching materials.
8. My attention is drawn by the appellant to other extensions, including roof extensions, to the rear of Church Walk and notably the dormer extension to No.24 Church Walk (No.24). Unlike the dormer at No.40, the dormer at No.24 does not extend across the full width of the existing roof and its more traditional half box design means that it appears subordinate to the main roof and retains the legibility of the double gable projection. I therefore find it lends very limited support to the proposal now before me.
9. In conclusion on the main issue, I find that the dormer extension does cause harm to the character and appearance of the host dwelling and fails to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the Thames Ditton CA. Consequently, it conflicts with Policy CS17 of the Elmbridge Core Strategy (2011) and Policy DM2 of the Development Management Plan (2015) (DMP) which together require all new development to achieve high quality design based on an understanding of local character, taking account the historic environment. It would further conflict with the heritage guidance of the National Planning Policy Framework (2021) and DMP Policy DM12 that development should preserve or enhance the character and appearance of a Conservation Area.

Conclusion

10. For the reasons given above, the appeal is dismissed.

R. Jones

INSPECTOR