
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 16 February 2022

by John D Allan BA(Hons) BTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 3RD March 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/M5450/D/21/3289185
27 Longcrofte Road, Edgware, HA8 6RR

- 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 Ashish Shah against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Harrow.
 - The application Ref P/2505/21, dated 15 June 2021, was refused by notice dated 29 September 2021.
 - The development proposed is described as the construction of a '*loft conversion*'.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of 27 Longcrofte Road and the wider area, and upon the living conditions of adjoining occupiers with regard to privacy.

Reasons

Character and Appearance

3. The appeal property is a two-storey, detached dwelling with a traditional pitched, hipped roof. It has a two-storey rear extension which has simply projected the form of the original dwelling, including its roof, backwards, creating a long ridgeline running front to back. It is one of just a few detached dwellings peppered around the wider area amongst otherwise predominantly semi-detached pairs. The proposal seeks to create living accommodation within the roof space by changing the side roof slopes of the original dwelling from hips to gables and altering the roof profile over the two-storey extension to a 'box-like' dormer that would be mostly glazed to the rear with access onto a balcony.
4. The Council's Supplementary Planning Document: Residential Design Guide 2010 (SPD) contains detailed guidance for roof alterations. It recognises that the roof form of a house is a significant part of the character of an area and that alterations may significantly alter the appearance of a house and that their

effect on the roof form needs careful consideration. It goes on to state that roof alterations and dormer windows should complement the original street character and not dominate buildings or impair their proportions or character. With regard to dormer windows, it states that they should generally be subordinate features in the roof and in order to achieve visual containment within the roofslope the SPD provides guidance on their position relative to the extremities of the roof.

5. The existing roof configuration at No 27 is conventional, as is its presence in the street scene and relationship with neighbouring properties. The circumstances of the appeal property are not unique and, in my view, represent precisely the circumstances where the guidance contained within the SPD is intended to apply in order to safeguard the character and appearance of the existing dwelling and wider area.
6. Contrary to the guidelines within the SPD, the proposed roof alterations would significantly alter the proportions, form, and appearance of the original dwelling. The hip to gable changes would create a flat crown that would be evident in oblique views from Longcrofte Road in the gap between both neighbouring properties. This uncharacteristic feature would be exaggerated further by the deeply projecting flat roof of the dormer that would extend beyond. The dormer's side cheeks would be only marginally set in from the flank wall of the dwelling creating an inharmonious relationship with the new, flat topped side gables, with further irregularity from the small section of hipped roof that would skirt the building to the sides and rear, just above eaves level. In further conflict with the SPD, from the rear, the dormer window would dominate the rear elevation, appearing effectively as a second floor extension with a flat roof, rather than a roof addition that would be comfortably contained within the rear roofslope.
7. I recognise that many dwellings in the area have been modified in a variety of forms, many with hip-to-gable changes and with large rear dormer windows. However, the majority of these have resulted in changes that are reasonably proportionate to the scale and appearance of the original building and roof form. My impression in this case is that the proposal would appear neither as a contemporary remodel of the original dwelling, or a sympathetic and proportionate roof alteration, but rather an unfortunate marriage of the two that would look incongruous and out of keeping within its context. This would be to the detriment of the visual qualities of the area. By failing to achieve a high standard of design that would respond positively to the character of the local area without harm, the proposal would conflict with Policy DM1 of the Council's Development Management Policies 2013 (DMP), Policy CS1 part B of the Harrow Core Strategy 2012, and Policy D3 of The London Plan 2021 (LP). For the same reasons it would conflict with the National Planning Policy Framework's objectives for achieving well-designed places.

Living Conditions

8. The SPD advises that the creation of a balcony, for example, by the use of an extension's roof, particularly where sited on or near a flank boundary, would normally be unacceptable as it would result in an unreasonable loss of privacy.

9. From my observations taken from the rear garden of the appeal property and looking towards the rear elevations of other dwellings to this side of Longcrofte Road, balconies at roof level do not feature. By its nature, it would provide an outdoor amenity space at a significantly and uncharacteristically elevated level that could potentially be used for outdoor socialising and possibly for reasonably long periods of time. This would be significantly different to the mutual overlooking that occurs from the windows of neighbouring properties or the outlook from inside a converted loft space with a conventional dormer window to the rear.
10. I recognise the appellant's efforts to mitigate the effects of overlooking by proposing 1.7m high obscure glazed panels to the side of the balcony, however, this would not prevent prolonged sight obliquely into and across neighbouring gardens from the rear of the balcony, or perceptions by neighbours of being overlooked by the presence of people using the elevated outdoor space. The use of potted vegetation could not be relied upon to avoid the harm that would be caused to the living conditions of both adjoining occupiers. As such the proposal would be further contrary to DMP Policy DM1 insofar as it seeks to avoid detriment to the privacy and amenity of neighbouring occupiers, and the requirement of LP Policy D3 for development to deliver appropriate privacy and amenity. In this context it would also further conflict with the Framework as it seeks to ensure development creates a high standard of amenity for existing users.

Conclusions

11. For the reasons given, I conclude that the proposal would harm the character and appearance of 27 Longcrofte Road and the wider area, and the living conditions of adjoining occupiers. I recognise the appellant's need for additional space to accommodate their growing family and their working environments. I have also noted the absence of any objections from neighbouring occupiers. However, neither of these factors alter my findings as they relate to the planning merits of the case. Accordingly, and having regard to all other matters raised, the appeal is dismissed.

John D Allan

INSPECTOR