The Planning Inspectorate

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 9 June 2022

by R Jones BA(Hons) DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 4th July 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/N1540/D/22/3292168
13 Bird Cherry Lane, Harlow CM17 0FR

- 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 Warren Jones against the decision of Harlow Council.
- The application Ref HW/HSE/21/00632, dated 1 November 2021, was refused by notice dated 24 January 2022.
- The development proposed is increase in ridge height to accommodate the loft conversion with rear dormer and skylights.

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the host dwelling and wider area.

Reasons

3. No.13 Bird Cherry Lane (No.13) is a recently built two-storey detached dwelling. The main section of the principal elevation of No.13 fronts Bird Cherry Lane with a smaller section angled so that it is orientated toward Maytree Crescent. This results in a slightly returned roof profile which has a relatively shallow pitch to it.

4. The appeal proposal is, in part, to raise the ridge of the roof of No.13 from around 1.85m to 2.8m, increasing its pitch. No.13 is currently noticeably, and quite starkly, lower in height than its immediate neighbours. To the north of No.13 is a three-storey apartment block with a flat roof on the corner of Bird Cherry Lane and Aspen Way. To the south-east is Maytree Crescent, a crescent of two-storey semi-detached dwellings which have a steeply pitched roof profile with small front dormer windows. Both the proposed increase in ridge height and pitch of the roof would therefore assimilate well within the streetscene. Because No.13 is detached and of an individual design, this part of the proposal would also be consistent with the guidance in the Harlow Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (2011) (SPD) that alterations to an existing ridge should only be allowed if viewed in isolation.

5. Within the front roofslope (of the main section of No.13) two rooflights are proposed. I observed on site that rooflights are characteristic of the area, but are typically within rear roofslopes of dwellings. However, the proposed

rooflights are modest in size, align with the existing windows at first-floor and although described only as 'upvc double glazed windows' on the planning application form, could be controlled to match the existing grey window finish. The rooflights would not therefore cause harm to the character appearance of either the host dwelling or the wider streetscene.

6. To the rear, two dormer windows are proposed. These have been designed to meet the guidance in the Harlow Design Guide Addendum Supplementary Planning Document (2021) (aSPD) in so far as they are set down from the ridge of the roof by at least 0.3m. I also note that the dormers have been set a reasonable distance from the eaves, but it is not clear from the annotation on the *Existing and Proposed Elevations* drawing whether the aSPD guidance (of 0.5m) has been met. However, the proposed dormer on the main part of the roof would be around 4.5m wide, filling a large part of the roofslope and dominating its appearance. Similarly, the second dormer would be around 1.2m wide, again, extending across much of the width of the smaller roofslope. Because of the returned roof profile described above, the two dormers would be orientated toward each other resulting in an awkward, cluttered composition that would compromise the form and appearance of the roof.

7. I recognise that one of the defining characteristics of the wider area is the mix of architectural styles and roof forms, but I observed that the roofs all have a simple, uncluttered and strong form. There are no other examples of rear dormers in the area. A number of dwellings, including those on Maytree Crescent, have dormer windows in the front roofslope but these are small in size, sit comfortably within a large roof plane and are very much subservient to it. Because of their position, size and relationship to one another, I find the proposed dormer windows would be at odds with the existing character of the area.

8. The guidance in the SPD is that dormer windows are not characteristic of Harlow's residential areas and therefore are not likely to be permitted where they are visible from the public realm. To the rear of No.13 is access to, and car parking for, those dwellings on Maytree Crescent. Although a semi-public realm, the proposed rear dormer windows would be highly visible from this location dominating the rear elevation of the host dwelling. Part of the cheek of the proposed dormer on the main part of the roof would also be visible when viewed from the north on Bird Cherry Lane.

9. For these reasons, the proposed rear dormers would cause significant harm to the character and appearance of the host dwelling and wider area. In addition to being contrary to the SPD guidance, they would also conflict with Policy PL1 of the Harlow Local Development Plan (2020) which, amongst other things, seeks to protect, enhance or improve local distinctiveness including patterns of development, and ensure development responds to architectural detailing and is visually attractive.

Other Matters

10. I appreciate that a dormer or roof extension is often an economical or cost effective way for a family to increase the living accommodation in their existing home. I also recognise the appellant's commitment to using high quality and energy efficient materials to ensure the dwelling has high thermal efficiency and low carbon emissions. However, whilst benefits of the proposals, these other matters are not sufficient to outweigh the harm I have found to the

character and appearance of No.13 and the wider area, and the conflict with the development plan.

Conclusion

11. For the reasons given above, I conclude that the appeal is dismissed.

R Jones

INSPECTOR