



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 11 April 2022

by M Cryan BA(Hons) DipTP MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 3 August 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/A5840/W/21/3286136

70 Montpelier Road, London SE15 2HE

- 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 Thomas Stevens against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Southwark.
 - The application Ref 21/AP/2543, dated 19 July 2021, was refused by notice dated 10 September 2021.
 - The development proposed is the construction of a rear dormer extension; the raising of the roof ridge by 300mm; and the installation of four rooflights on the front roof slope.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matter

2. The Council adopted a new Southwark Local Plan ("the SLP") on 23 February 2022, replacing various development plan documents including the 2007 Saved Southwark Plan and the 2011 Southwark Core Strategy referred to in the Council's decision notice. During this appeal I therefore sought comments from both main parties on the relevant policies of the new SLP. I have referred to the 2022 policies rather than those of the superseded development plan documents in my reasons below.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

4. The appeal relates to a two-storey mid-terraced residential property located on the eastern side of Montpelier Road. The building has been converted into flats or bedsits. Montpelier Road itself is a long street dominated by Victorian terraced houses. The eastern side of the road is characterised primarily by properties of the same original design as the appeal property, featuring shared gables, shallow classically-styled porches, and parapet walls between neighbouring roofs. There is a bit more diversity of types on the western side, but most blocks on the street retain considerable internal consistency and integrity of design, scale, and detailing, and this makes a strong positive contribution to Montpelier Road's pleasant and orderly character and appearance. The terraces are broken up here and there by the occasional more modern infill building, though these are relatively few and far between.

5. The proposed development is the construction of a rear dormer extension with four rooflights in the front roof slope and one rooflight in the flat roof at the rear dormer. This would facilitate the creation of an additional bedroom and bathroom at the existing loft level. The scheme would involve raising the roof ridge height by around 0.3m; the submitted drawings indicate that this would bring it to the same height as the parapet walls on either side of the roof. The drawings also show that the new, higher, ridge would be set further back towards the rear of the building than the existing ridge.
6. The raising of the roof ridge on the appeal property would diminish the visual consistency which is presently a strong characteristic of the terrace and the street as a whole, and this would be made more apparent by the setting back of the ridge towards the rear of the building. Raising the roof ridge to approximately the same height as the parapet walls on either side would also undermine the distinctive contribution the parapets make to the regular rhythm of the dwellings on the east side of Montpelier Road. The rear rooflight would protrude above the raised roof ridge, making it visible from the street from where it would appear as an unusual and intrusive addition. All of these factors would detract from the consistent and orderly appearance which contributes positively to the street's character.
7. The appellant contends that there is a lack of consistency in ridge heights in the immediate proximity of the appeal site and the wider Montpelier Road roofscape, and drew my attention to various examples nearby in support of this claim. However, Montpelier Road is on a gently (but perceptible) slope from south to north, and many of the differences in ridge heights (such as between Nos 17 and 19, Nos 29 and 31, and Nos 58 and 60) are simply the result of small steps down within blocks to accommodate the changing ground level. Other examples (such as Nos 41, 61 and 78) appear to be much more modern infill developments rather than the traditional terraces. While the different forms of buildings and roofs along Montpelier Road contribute some diversity and interest to the street, from what I saw its character is still overwhelmingly defined by the consistency and regularity of the terraces, including their regular rooflines.
8. The Council's 2015 "Residential Design Standards" Supplementary Planning Document ("the SPD") advises that there should be no roof extensions above the height of the ridge of the main roof. The roof ridges of Nos 22 and 64, which appear to be of the same original terrace type as the appeal property, have been raised above the main ridge. Neither of those two examples has a relevant planning permission, but while the appellant has suggested that that it is likely that they fall within the scope of permitted development, the Council is clear (at least in respect of No 64) that the development is unauthorised. The appellant also considers that the alterations to the roof ridges at both properties are "not readily visible from the street" and "de minimis". However, in neither case does the ridge appear to have been raised to the same height as the adjacent parapet wall, nor does either property have a rear rooflight which would be visible from the street as in this case. Neither example is therefore precisely comparable to the current proposal, and neither adds significant weight in favour of the appeal scheme.
9. Other than in respect of the protruding rooflight, the Council raised no objection to the proposal as it related to the rear of the appeal property, and none of the evidence before me or what I saw on site leads me to a different

view. I also consider that the proposed materials would be acceptable, and note that the development would not have any unacceptably harmful impact on neighbours' living conditions. However, that the proposal would be acceptable in these respects does not outweigh or negate the other harm I have found.

10. I conclude that, because of the negative visual impact of the raised and set back roof ridge, and the intrusive rear rooflight, the proposed development would be harmful to the character and appearance of the area. The proposal therefore conflicts with Policies P13 and P14 of the SLP, and with Policy D4 of the London Plan 2021. Together, and among other things, these policies seek to ensure that development is well designed, and responds to the existing townscape in its height, massing and arrangement. For the same reasons, the proposal conflicts with the provisions of Chapter 12 of the National Planning Policy Framework, which seek to achieve well-designed places.

Conclusion

11. The proposal would be harmful to the character and appearance of the area, and so would conflict with the development plan taken as a whole. There are no material considerations that indicate the decision should be made other than in accordance with the development plan. For the reasons given above, the appeal is therefore dismissed.

M Cryan

Inspector