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# Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 7 March 2023

**by H Lock BA(Hons) DipTP MRTPI**

**an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State**

**Decision date: 21<sup>st</sup> March 2023**

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**Appeal Ref: APP/M1520/D/22/3313927**

**31 Louisa Avenue, South Benfleet, BENFLEET, SS7 4DA**

- 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 Nicholas Bonnett against the decision of Castle Point Borough Council.
  - The application Ref. 22/0737/FUL, dated 1 October 2022, was refused by notice dated 22 November 2022.
  - The development proposed is hip to gable loft conversion with a front and rear dormer to create two new bedrooms and a new bathroom within the loft space.
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## 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 semi-detached pair of which it forms part and the street scene.

## Reasons

3. The appeal property is a semi-detached single-storey dwelling, and the pair both retain their original hipped roofed form. The wider street scene of Louisa Avenue contains a variety of dwelling styles, but the western end is a more consistent group of hipped- and gable-sided bungalows. Within this group some have been extended with front dormer windows, but for the most part these appear reasonably modest in size and scale, being contained within the original hipped or gabled roof form. There are a few notable examples of much larger flat-roofed dormer windows which occupy much of the front roof plane but these are the exception, and are not a defining characteristic of the area.
4. Within this context, there are few semi-detached dwellings where one half of the pair has changed its roof form from the other. There are a small number of dwellings where one half has a front dormer window and the attached property roof is unaltered. However, as noted above, due to the size of these dormers and the retained symmetry of the original roof form, these changes have altered, but not destroyed, the visual symmetry of semi-detached pairs.
5. Policy EC2 of the Castle Point Borough Local Plan 1998 (LP) expects high standards of design to building extensions, with particular regard to matters including scale and design, which should be appropriate to its setting and not

harmful to the character of its surroundings. In support of its policies, the Council has adopted its Residential Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document 2013 (RDG). RDG7 requires the roof design of any development to be compatible with the dwelling but to also be informed by the prevailing character of the area and surrounding roof forms. It advises that dormer windows should be ancillary features that do not dominate the roofscape, and that any form of roof development which results in the detrimental disruption or loss of symmetry to a pair or group of dwellings will be refused.

6. The proposal would alter the roof shape of the dwelling but would also add large front and rear dormer windows. Whilst I note that roof verges would be provided around the dormer windows, as a proportion of the roof slopes in which they would be set they would still be quite large. Given the scale of other rear dormers in the vicinity, in principle, I find no objection to the rear dormer window. However, the combination of the hip-to-gable roof change and the introduction of a front dormer window of the size proposed would appear unacceptably dominant and disruptive to the symmetry of the semi-detached pair. The extent of the change proposed would undermine the character and appearance of the pair, and in so doing, the street scene.
7. The appellant has drawn attention to other dormer windows in the vicinity, but the Council advises that they either pre-date a requirement for express planning permission, or were granted before the current design guidance came into force. RDG7 confirms that roof development must not repeat poor forms of development, unless it would rectify an unbalanced or unsymmetrical pair or group of dwellings. This would not apply in this case, but would repeat a roof form that is the exception in the street scene. Contrary to the appellant's assessment, I do not agree that there are many dwellings in the vicinity that have been permitted to deviate from the RDG advice.
8. I acknowledge that a hip-to-gable alteration at 41 Louisa Avenue, to which the appellant refers, has changed the symmetry of a pair. This appears to have been built as 'Permitted Development', and whilst it now forms part of the street scene, it is not typical in this part of Louisa Avenue. In any event, the impact of that roof change on the pair of which it forms part is less than proposed in this case as it does not include a large flat-roofed front dormer. As such, these examples offer limited support to the proposal.
9. Nevertheless, I have had regard to their presence, but the emphasis on design quality has altered since they were built, with the National Planning Policy Framework 2021 (the Framework) seeking to create high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings which add to the quality of the area and are visually attractive as a result of good architecture.
10. I therefore conclude that the proposal would detract from the character and appearance of the semi-detached pair of which it forms part and the wider street scene, in conflict with the Framework, LP Policy EC2 and the RDG.
11. For the above reasons, I conclude that this appeal should be dismissed.

*H Lock*

INSPECTOR