

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 17 April 2023

by Andrew Dale BA (Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 04 May 2023

Appeal Ref. APP/W5780/D/23/3314067
87 Lord Avenue, Clayhall, Ilford IG5 0HN

- 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 Sandani and Ash Perara against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Redbridge.
 - The application ref. 2749/22, dated 16 August 2022, was refused by notice dated 12 October 2022.
 - The development proposed is *"Loft conversion with one front dormer, one rear dormer and one side dormer. Alterations to roof including raising ridge height. Two rooflights."*
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for *"Loft conversion with one front dormer, one rear dormer and one side dormer. Alterations to roof including raising ridge height. Two rooflights."* at 87 Lord Avenue, Clayhall, Ilford IG5 0HN in accordance with the terms of the application ref. 2749/22, dated 16 August 2022, subject to the following conditions:
 - 1) The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than three years from the date of this decision.
 - 2) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans titled/numbered: Existing Plans and Location (MDP.LA/01 Rev: A); Elevations Existing (MDP.LA/02); Plans Proposed (MDP.LA/03 Rev: A); and Elevations Proposed (MDP.LA/04 Rev: A).
 - 3) The materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of the development hereby permitted shall match those of the existing building.

Preliminary matters

2. In the heading and decision above, I have used the comprehensive description of the proposal given in the Council's decision notice and adopted by the appellants on the householder planning appeal form. The description given on the application form is inaccurate since it refers to only two dormers, a single "roof room" when there would be two such rooms in the roof and a roof height to match 71 Abbotswood Gardens when the plans show a slightly lower height for the new roof.

Main issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development upon the character and appearance of the dwelling and the visual amenity of the locality.

Reasons

4. Abbotswood Gardens and Lord Avenue are primarily characterised by two-storey, semi-detached houses with hipped roofs. The appeal property is located on a prominent corner plot at the crossroads junction between the two roads and actually forms a two-storey, semi-detached pair with 71 Abbotswood Gardens. Its front elevation faces that road rather than Lord Avenue. I observed that many of the houses in the locality have been variously extended.
5. The proposal seeks to create a loft floor by constructing a new part-hipped roof (which the parties refer to as a barn roof) with a raised ridge height, instead of the large expanse of lower crowned roof over the core of the building, and a fully hipped gable projection to the rear, instead of the rear hipped wing that runs parallel to and behind the crown roof. The roof alterations would also see the inclusion of three dormers and two roof lights.
6. There is an extant planning permission (ref. 2529/20) for an extension scheme at the appeal property involving a loft conversion and roof alterations. Amongst other things, that scheme shows a fully hipped roof and a large roof light where the part-hipped roof and the front dormer are now proposed respectively. I have taken into account this planning history as a material consideration but the main issue in this appeal turns on the effect of the proposal upon the character and appearance of the existing dwelling, rather than on making direct comparisons with the extant scheme as such. The Council raises no objections to the rear and side dormers, which were also part of the extant scheme or to the two roof lights. The Council takes exception to the position, size, design and appearance of the part-hipped roof and the front dormer only.
7. The Council's Housing Design Supplementary Planning Document 2019 (SPD) clearly carries weight as a material consideration in decision making but it should not be applied prescriptively to the exclusion of all other factors, including the physical circumstances and context of a site. Indeed, the SPD says that the Council will consider each development on its merits on the basis that each property is different.
8. The main thrust of the case for the appellants is that the appeal scheme has been purposely designed to improve the appearance of this rather unusual semi-detached house which is significantly different to its partner in terms of scale, roof height and design. I consider this point to be well made.
9. The appeal property possesses little architectural merit. The existing crown roof, which consists of a wide, extensive area of flat roof with a narrow band of dummy hipped roofing around it, reaches only part way up the adjoining two-storey advanced front bay of 71 Abbotswood Gardens which in itself is a subsidiary feature of that property set well below the main roof ridge. Owing to its design and limited height, the crown roof section lends an unsatisfactory horizontal emphasis to the front of the appeal property, has an awkward juxtaposition with the higher, parallel section of hipped roof to the rear and is wholly out of symmetry and at odds with the original hipped roof of the partner

property. These unsatisfactory visual outcomes are very apparent to observers given the prominent location of the appeal site at the crossroads.

10. Although there would be no increase in footprint and the height of the new ridge would be only slightly lower than the shorter ridge over the partner property, the scheme would undoubtedly change the appearance of the appeal property. Still, the proposed part-hipped roof would be well executed in terms of its overall profile, form, position, size, height, design and appearance. The undue horizontal emphasis of the dwelling would be addressed. The roof profile and shape across the appeal property would appear far more sympathetic and integrated. The result overall would be a more visually attractive dwelling than the existing property.
11. The resulting dwelling would still not be consistent with the attached neighbour, but it would have a closer visual harmony and balance with 71 Abbotswood Gardens than the current dwelling. These dwellings viewed as a pair already differ in form and character from, and are therefore inconsistent with, all the other nearby semi-detached houses. Given the rather disappointing architectural character of the existing property and the mix of buildings and extensions in the immediate vicinity of the appeal site, the degree of change brought about through the appeal scheme would not appear intrusive or incongruous. Rather, I consider that it would be a positive and innovative intervention. Although this type of roof design is not seen anywhere else in the local street scenes, it would be an architecturally coherent proposal which would add to the diversity of built forms in the local area whilst enhancing the overall character of the dwelling and the semi-detached pair.
12. The front dormer would have a simple pitched roof, be centrally located and only utilise a very small portion of the front roof slope. It would be set sufficiently within the front roof slope and not appear oversized or too dominant. This finding is aided by the proposed inclusion of windows in the front dormer that are not as deep those below at first floor level. The SPD advises that front and side dormers are generally not considered to be appropriate, unless they are an original or common feature of properties in the street. As the appellants note, this does not mean that all front dormers must be automatically refused. It would make little sense to oppose this well-designed front dormer when the rear and side dormers, to which the Council raises no objection, would be equally visible from public vantage points, owing to the corner location of the appeal site. There are also very visible large side dormers at 66 and 85 Lord Avenue close to the appeal site.
13. Whilst no other properties in the vicinity feature a front dormer, it can be equally said that no other properties have such an expansive crown roof. Looking at the proposal on its merits, the scheme would make a positive architectural and urban design contribution to its context and location even with the front dormer included. Noting the proposed use of matching facing materials, I consider that the proposed development as a whole would represent a visually attractive solution, exhibit a high standard of design, be sufficiently complementary, sympathetic and subordinate to the parent building and be respectful of the established street scenes along Lord Avenue and Abbotswood Gardens. I therefore conclude on the main issue that the proposed

development would not result in harm to the character and appearance of the dwelling or to the visual amenity of the locality.

14. As the development would be an example of high-quality design, show sufficient respect for the SPD when viewing the case in the round and on its merits and improve the character and appearance of the dwelling and the locality, there would be no conflict with the aims of Policies LP26 and LP30 of the Redbridge Local Plan 2015-2030, Policy D3 of the London Plan 2021 or the National Planning Policy Framework insofar as it relates to achieving well-designed places.
15. The scheme will enhance the quality of life for the occupiers of no. 87 by providing additional usable floor space in the roof through improving the available headroom. This is a further factor that weighs in favour of granting planning permission. The Council, correctly in my view, did not identify an excessive loss of amenity for neighbouring properties for any reason.
16. In addition to a condition setting a time limit for the commencement of development, a condition controlling external materials is necessary in the interests of local character. I consider that a condition requiring that the development is carried out in accordance with the relevant approved drawings is necessary as this provides certainty, even though the Council did not call for such a condition in its Questionnaire. Such a condition should not come as a surprise to any party.
17. For the reasons given above and having regard to all other matters raised and the absence of objections from any local residents or organisations, I conclude that this appeal should be allowed.

Andrew Dale

INSPECTOR