



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 3 May 2023

by C Carpenter BA MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 7 June 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/B5480/D/23/3314219

4 Ascension Road, Romford, Havering RM5 3RS

- 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 Ali Yousaf against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Havering.
 - The application Ref P1601.22, dated 29 September 2022, was refused by notice dated 19 December 2022.
 - The development is described as “Retrospective planning application for retention of single storey rear/side extension and garage change into habitable room”.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed insofar as it relates to the addition of a rear dormer.
2. The appeal is allowed insofar as it relates to the construction of a single storey side/rear extension, including conversion of attached garage to habitable use and alterations to front elevation, and planning permission is granted for the construction of a single storey side/rear extension, including conversion of attached garage to habitable use and alterations to front elevation at 4 Ascension Road, Romford, Havering RM5 3RS in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref P1601.22, dated 29 September 2022, and the plans submitted with it, so far as relevant to that part of the development hereby permitted.

Preliminary Matters

3. The description of development on the application form does not include the addition of a rear dormer or alterations to the front elevation. The Council revised the description of development to include these elements. The rear dormer and alterations to the front elevation are clearly shown on the plans before me and the appellant has commented on all elements of the scheme I am considering in their statement. Therefore, I consider the development to be as described in the decision.
4. The application form states the development was started in August 2022 but had not been completed. I saw during my visit that both the addition of a rear dormer and the construction of a single storey side/rear extension, including conversion of attached garage to habitable use and alterations to front elevation, had been completed. This appears to be in accordance with the plans before me. I have therefore considered the appeal on the basis that the development has already taken place.
5. The additional rear dormer is clearly severable from the side/rear extension, including conversion of attached garage to habitable use and alterations to

front elevation, as it is physically and functionally independent. Therefore, under section 79(1)(b) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, I have the power to issue a split decision in this case.

6. I have considered the appellant's argument that the rear dormer has planning permission granted by the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015. This is not a matter for me to determine in the context of an appeal made under section 78 of the Act. It is open to the appellant to apply to have the matter determined under section 191 of the Act. Any such application would be unaffected by my determination of this appeal. I have decided the appeal on its merits.

Main Issue

7. The main issue in this appeal is the effect of the development on the character and appearance of the existing semi-detached pair of houses and the surrounding area.

Reasons

8. Nos 4 and 4a Ascension Road are a pair of semi-detached two-storey houses of modern appearance. They have matching front and rear dormers at first floor level, set well down on either side of the pitched roof. Both also have a front-facing single-storey garage projecting well forwards of their façade, to the side of the front door. These features contribute to the symmetrical appearance of the pair when viewed from the front and back, reinforced at the back by the broadly similar width of the rear gardens. At the front, the plots are asymmetrical: No 4's plot is wider than its neighbour's, as is the gap between the flank wall of the house and side boundary.
9. The surrounding area is suburban and residential, with a mix of mostly detached and semi-detached houses. Although the semi-detached houses are generally symmetrical, the pairs mostly differ in style from each other. The design of the detached houses also varies widely, so the character of the area is eclectic. The houses on either side of the appeal site and its partner are each quite different in appearance from Nos 4 and 4a. Whilst complementary, the roof forms, materials and design details of this group vary significantly.

Rear dormer

10. The rear dormer has been added above the original dormer and is positioned only marginally below the ridge line of the roof. It is substantially wider than the original dormer, extending almost to the gable end. It has a very dominant presence and the disjointed, stepped appearance of the two dormers detracts significantly from the integrity of the original roof form. This discordant effect is reinforced by the differing window style, size and placement. The overall appearance substantially diminishes the symmetry of the pair of houses, which harms their character and appearance. Given the rear roof of the pair can be viewed from other nearby houses, this also harms the character and appearance of the surrounding area.
11. I note the additional dormer is clad in roof-tiles to match the existing dormer and the roof. However, this design detail is not sufficient to outweigh the harm I find. I have considered the argument that there are many dormer additions surrounding the appeal property, so this addition does not cause visual harm. Little evidence has been provided of examples where a dormer has been added

above an existing dormer. I observed other dormer additions during my site visit, but none was directly comparable to the appeal proposal. In any case, circumstances vary from one site to another, and I have considered this appeal on its merits.

12. For the above reasons, I conclude the rear dormer has a harmful effect on the character and appearance of the existing semi-detached pair of houses and the surrounding area. This is contrary to Policy 26 of the Havering Local Plan (HLP), and the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework). These policies seek high quality design and require development to respond to distinctive local building forms, respecting visual integrity and established rhythms. It is also contrary to the Havering Residential Extensions and Alterations Supplementary Planning Document (REA SPD), which states dormers should be contained well within the body of the roof, well in from any gables and well below the roof's ridge line.
13. The Council's reason for refusal for the rear dormer refers to a 'Havering Residential Design Guide'. However, in its decision report it refers to wording in the REA SPD. I have therefore considered the REA SPD in my decision.

Side/rear extension

14. The extension and associated alterations to the front elevation of the appeal site have resulted in a change to the symmetry of the semi-detached houses at ground floor level when viewed from the street. However, while the width of the front ground floor projections now differs, the asymmetrical plot widths means this change is not discordant and the extension is not dominant. The side extension down the flank of No 4 follows the line of the site boundary. The depth of the front projections remains similar, and the symmetry of the matching front dormers is maintained at first floor level.
15. The overall appearance of the side extension is simple and modern, which complements the original design of the semi-detached pair. The white render finish contrasts with the brick finish of the garage at No 4a but is not incongruous. It complements the tiled roof and other external details such as fascia boards, windows and doors. It is also like rendered finishes used elsewhere in the street. On balance, I consider the extension and front alterations do not harm the appearance of the semi-detached pair and make a positive contribution to the eclectic character of the surrounding area.
16. I note the REA SPD states single storey side extensions should normally be set back from the main building line to create a break in the façade. However, the main building line of the existing house is behind the projecting front garage. A side extension in line with the garage makes more effective use of the tapering plot and, in combination with the choice of materials, creates a simpler and more concordant design in this instance.
17. The extension to the rear of the house is subservient in scale to the original dwelling and uses complementary materials, so has a neutral effect on the character and appearance of the house from the rear.
18. For the above reasons, I conclude the construction of a side/rear extension, including conversion of attached garage to habitable use and alterations to front elevation, does not have a harmful effect on the character and appearance of the existing semi-detached pair of houses or on the surrounding

area. Accordingly, I find no conflict with Policy D4 of the London Plan, Policy 26 of the HLP, the REA SPD or the Framework. These policies seek high quality design and require development to respect and complement the character of the site and local area, responding to distinctive local building forms.

Other Matters

19. I acknowledge the rear dormer provides enhanced living space for the occupants of the house. However, this consideration does not outweigh the harm I find.
20. Concerns have been raised about compliance with Building Regulations, the application of external insulation down the side of the extension, inadequate guttering and a lack of drainage/soakaway. These matters are outside my jurisdiction in determining this appeal, so have not influenced my decision. Further concerns have been raised about party wall notification, works affecting the boundary fence and the risk of structural damage to neighbouring property. These are private matters between the parties and are also not within my jurisdiction. An interested party has said the plans are incorrect, but from my visit the development appears consistent with the plans before me.
21. Reference is made to trees and hedges having been dug up at the start of construction. The Council has not raised concerns about the loss of trees or planting on the site. The information before me does not lead me to a different conclusion.

Conditions

22. As the construction of the single storey side/rear extension, including conversion of attached garage to habitable use and alterations to front elevation, has already taken place, conditions relating to time limit for construction, compliance with plans and materials are not necessary. The Council have suggested a 'balcony condition' but beyond the title they have not provided any wording or a reason. On that basis, I am unable to conclude such a condition is necessary.

Conclusion

23. The appeal proposal includes two different elements. I have concluded the addition of a rear dormer has a harmful effect on the character and appearance of the existing semi-detached pair of houses and the surrounding area. However, I have concluded the construction of a side/rear extension, including conversion of attached garage to habitable use and alterations to front elevation, does not have a harmful effect on the character and appearance of the existing semi-detached pair of houses or the surrounding area.
24. Having had regard to the development plan as a whole, the Framework and all other matters raised, I dismiss the appeal in respect of the addition of a rear dormer. However, I allow the appeal in respect of the single storey side/rear extension, including conversion of attached garage to habitable use and alterations to front elevation.

C Carpenter

INSPECTOR