
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 8 June 2023

by Graham Wraight BA(Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 20 June 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/J4525/D/22/3313289

64 Grosvenor Street, Sunderland SR5 2EQ

- 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 Sinan Ye against the decision of Sunderland City Council.
 - The application Ref 22/02093/FUL, dated 17 September 2022, was refused by notice dated 16 December 2022.
 - The development proposed is the erection of front dormer and ramp and canopy to front entrance.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for the erection of front dormer and ramp and canopy to front entrance at 64 Grosvenor Street, Sunderland SR5 2EQ in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref 22/02093/FUL, dated 17 September 2022, subject to the following conditions:
 - 1) The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than 3 years from the date of this decision.
 - 2) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plan: Existing and proposed plan, 22165 01.
 - 3) The materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of the front dormer hereby permitted shall match those used in the existing building.

Preliminary Matter

2. I have used the description of development given on the decision notice, as this refers to the three elements of development that are shown on the submitted plan. This description is consistent with that set out on the appeal form.

Main Issue

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

Reasons

4. The appeal property sits towards the middle of a long terrace of single storey dwellings, referred to as 'Sunderland cottages' and which are unique to the city. Whilst the general scale of these dwellings remains unaltered, their ground floor frontages display a range of different facing materials including brick, pebble dash and render, with various window styles and sizes present. At first floor level, a number of properties in the vicinity have large box dormers to their front elevations which occupy most of their respective roof planes.

5. The differences in the appearance of the dwellings on Grosvenor Street creates significant variation in the street scene. In comparison to other existing dormers close to the appeal site, the proposed front dormer would be a smaller and a much more modest addition. It would be sandwiched in between the large dormers at Nos. 56 & 58 and 68 & 70 Grosvenor Street, and also viewed in the context of the dormer to the front of the dwelling on Florence Crescent, which terminates views taken along the road. In these circumstances, the proposed dormer would integrate into the street scene in an acceptable manner and would not cause harm to the character and appearance of the host dwelling or the area.
6. The Council's Development Management Supplementary Planning Document 2021 (SPD) acknowledges the uniqueness of the Sunderland cottages and that they have heritage significance. It aims to safeguard their character and appearance by preventing dormers to their front elevations, although on those terraced blocks where at least 50% of properties already have such dormers it is advised that new dormers may be acceptable. However, the appeal dwelling lies within a block of 17 dwellings, only 6 of which have dormers. Therefore, the proposal would fall under the 50% threshold and fail to accord with the guidance set out in the SPD.
7. In this case however, given the circumstances of the street scene in which the proposed dormer would sit and its small size, the application of the SPD would be an unduly arbitrary way of assessing its impact. Consequently, I find the proposed dormer to be acceptable, notwithstanding the provisions set out in the SPD. Whilst no other Sunderland cottages in the immediate area have front canopies, what is proposed in this instance would be very small and would not compromise the visual integrity of the terrace. The proposed ramp would only extend within the confines of the appeal dwelling. Neither of these elements would as a result cause harm to the character and appearance of the host dwelling or the area.
8. For these reasons, I conclude that the proposed development would not cause harm to the character and appearance of the host dwelling or the area. Therefore, the proposal would accord with Policy BH1 of the Core Strategy and Development Plan 2020, which seeks to protect character and appearance. There would also be no conflict with the aims of the National Planning Policy Framework in the same regard. Whilst I have noted a conflict with the SPD where it refers to front dormers on Sunderland cottages, in this instance this does not justify the refusal of planning permission for a proposal that I have found not to cause harm and to accord with the development plan.

Conditions

9. Conditions relating to the time period to commence development and the approved plan are needed to provide certainty. A condition requiring that the external facing materials of the dormer match those used on the existing dwelling is necessary to ensure that it has an acceptable visual finish.

Conclusion

10. For the reasons given above, I conclude that the appeal should be allowed.

Graham Wraight INSPECTOR