
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 15 November 2023

by K E Down MA(Oxon) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 6 December 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/N5090/D/23/3325398

1D Southway, Totteridge, Barnet, London, N20 8EB

- 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 Tang against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Barnet.
 - The application Ref 23/0910/HSE, dated 2 March 2023, was refused by notice dated 4 July 2023.
 - The development proposed is a roof and loft conversion to provide two bedrooms and a bathroom. The proposal includes rear facing dormers and front and side facing Velux windows.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. There is one main issue which is the effect of the proposed roof and loft conversion on the character and appearance of the host dwelling and the street scene of Southway.

Reasons

3. The appeal dwelling is a modern, double fronted, two storey house. It is one of three similar dwellings situated at the higher end of Southway, a spacious, established residential street that is set on a hill. Other dwellings in the street are of variable age and design but most are large, detached, traditional inter-war houses with pitched hipped roofs and feature gables.
 4. The appeal dwelling and its similar neighbours have characteristic low pitched, hipped roofs. Owing to their similar style and the fall in ground levels, their eaves and ridges step down, one from another, forming a distinct pattern down the street. This general pattern of stepping down is maintained between Nos 1 and 1B and Nos 1D and 3.
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5. The proposed roof alteration and loft conversion at the appeal dwelling would comprise an increase in the height of the ridge of about 0.7m and of the eaves by somewhat less. The pitch of the roof would thus increase from some 34 degrees to about 41 degrees. The resulting dwelling would have an altered character and appearance, losing its distinct, low pitched roof style with upper floor windows close to the eaves. It would also become taller with higher eaves than its adjacent similar neighbour, No 1C. This would disrupt the stepping down pattern seen between the three similar dwellings and others nearby.
6. In terms of the dwelling itself, the increase in both the eaves height and the pitch and height of the roof would detract from the architectural style of the building. In particular, the creation of a noticeably greater separation between the top of the first-floor windows and the eaves would interfere with the characteristic proportions of the dwelling. This would be emphasised by the increase in the pitch and height of the roof, further disrupting the original, distinctive proportions.
7. In the context of its similar neighbours and other houses in the street, the changes would result in the dwelling appearing differently and less pleasingly proportioned, detracting from the characteristic pattern and rhythm of dwellings in this part of Southway.
8. The appellant points out that the appeal dwelling should not only be compared with its similar neighbours but with other nearby dwellings. I agree. However, even when a wider range of dwellings is taken into account and notwithstanding that a pitched roof and the original symmetry of the dwelling would be maintained, I find that the proposed alterations would be unsympathetic to the host dwelling and incongruous in the street scene. Moreover, I do not agree that the presence of vegetation in front gardens which provides some screening would amount to a reason to allow the proposed, poorly proportioned, alterations. Vegetation may not be retained in the longer term and, in any case, its presence would not justify poor design.
9. The appellant further argues that larger ground and first floor extensions were permitted at the appeal dwelling in 2022 and that the Council does not object to the currently proposed dormers or roof lights. Whilst that may be so, these matters do not alter or outweigh the harm that would be caused to the character and appearance of the appeal dwelling and wider street scene by the proposed roof alterations when taken as a whole.
10. Finally, the appellant states that a loft conversion at the appeal dwelling could not be achieved without the proposed increases in height and that other dwellings nearby have visible roof alterations. I would not disagree, but acceptable loft conversions cannot be achieved in all cases and others that I saw nearby, whilst visible, did not disrupt the essential characteristics or proportions of the host dwellings or materially detract from the street scene.
11. It is concluded on the main issue that the proposed roof and loft conversion would have a materially detrimental effect on the character and appearance of the host dwelling and the street scene of Southway. In consequence, it would conflict with Policy D3 of the London Plan, 2021, Policy CS5 of Barnet's Local Plan (Core Strategy), 2012, Policy DM01 of Barnet's Local Plan (Development

Management Policies), 2012 and with the Council's Residential Design Guidance SPD, 2016.

12. Taken together, and amongst other things, these expect all development to follow a design-led approach which responds positively to local distinctiveness, preserves or enhances local character and respects the appearance, height and pattern of surrounding buildings through high quality architecture that pays attention to detail. In particular, extensions should be consistent with the form, scale and architectural style of the original building. Consistency with the original building should be achieved by, amongst other things, respecting the proportions of the existing house and using an appropriate roof form.
13. For the reasons set out above and having regard to all other matters raised, including the extensive e-mail negotiations between the Council's planning officer and the appellant's architect, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

KE Down
INSPECTOR