



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 21 November 2023

by John D Allan BA(Hons) BTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 12.12.2023

Appeal Ref: APP/M1710/D/23/3331177

3 Murray Grove, Alton, Hampshire, GU34 2FY

- 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 & Mrs Fitzharris against the decision of East Hampshire District Council.
 - The application Ref 59558/002, dated 20 July 2023, was refused by notice dated 13 September 2023.
 - The development proposed is described as the erection of '*rear three pitch roof dormer with four roof lights to the front roof slope*'.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposal upon the character and appearance of the host dwelling and wider area.

Reasons

3. The appeal property is one half of a two-storey, 'T-shaped' asymmetrical semi-detached pair of dwellings on the fringe of a contemporary housing estate and fronting onto Anstey Road, with an enclosed communal car parking area to the rear beyond its curtilage. The attached property at No 1 has a front and rear gabled façade. No 3 is orientated perpendicular to this, recessed behind the front and rear elevations of No 1, and with its ridge running parallel to the road. The proposal seeks to convert the loft space into habitable accommodation facilitated by a roof extension to the rear and the installation of four rooflights to the front.
4. The Council's *Residential Extensions & Householder Development Supplementary Planning Document July 2018* (SPD) recognises that the design and profile of a domestic roof makes an important contribution to a dwelling's overall appearance. In relation to dormer windows the SPD advises that they should complement the proportions, size, arrangement, and details of existing windows and that they should not be over-scaled or dominant on the roof. It goes on to state that a small dormer will be preferable to a large 'box' dormer and that a pitched roof will normally be preferred to a flat roof, unless the character of the dwelling suggests otherwise. For rooflights the SPD states that they too should be well related to the existing fenestration on the building,

- that they should not protrude significantly from the roof, should be evenly spaced, and should not dominate the roof.
5. The proposal is described as three pitch roof dormers. Their front facing gables would be aligned with the window pattern below. However, the gables would be linked with a slightly recessed flat roof extension. The proposed loft plan demonstrates that the rear roof addition would provide headroom and useable space for its full width. The proposal would effectively comprise one large dormer. This would be clearly evident when viewed externally. The gables would add some articulation, but in my opinion they would fail to disguise its scale and form as a single addition that would span the majority proportion of the rear roof.
 6. The roof extension would be openly seen from the rear car park and in the outlook from other dwellings that surround it. It would also be obvious from the public domain in oblique views from Murray Grove over the rear garden of No 5. Although the roof extension would be set up from the eaves and down from the ridge, with reasonable insets to each side, it would appear as a single addition that in my judgement would be overly wide and dominant on the rear roof slope. Its flat roof elements would be incongruous and poorly related to the character and form of the original dwelling and out of keeping with the consistent architectural styling of the wider estate. In my view it would precisely represent the form of development the SPD advises against and would be harmful to the character and appearance of No 3 and the wider area.
 7. Two of the rooflights to the front would align with the window pattern below. The middle two would not, and each would be of different proportions to the other. Whilst front dormers are features found locally on some properties, including along Anstey Road, an irregular pattern and proliferation of rooflights is not. In terms of their numbers and positioning the roof lights would appear both dominant and unbalanced. For these reasons this part of the proposal would also fail to conform with the SPD's advice and would equally harm the character and appearance of No 3 and the wider area.
 8. The appeal site sits close to the Anstey Conservation Area (CA), the boundary to which lies a short distance to the north east further along Anstey Road. Slightly further away in the same direction is a grade II listed terrace. Based on observations during my visit, I saw that the visual impacts of the rear dormer would be contained to the surroundings of the estate of which it forms part. Given the recessed position of the front roof slope to No 3 behind the dominant gable to No 1, the rooflights would not be seen in any meaningful context that would affect the settings of either the CA or the listed buildings. Therefore, and contrary to the Council's view, I am satisfied that the significance of each, as heritage assets, would be unaffected.
 9. Despite my findings in relation to the settings of nearby heritage assets, by failing to display the quality of design required to respect the design and character of the original building and the character and local distinctiveness of the wider area, the proposal would conflict with Policy CP29 of the East Hampshire District Local Plan: Joint Core Strategy 2014, Policy HE2 of the East Hampshire District Local Plan: Second Review 2006, and Policy DE2 of the Alton Neighbourhood Development Plan 2011 to 2028 (2015). For the same reasons it would conflict with the National Planning Policy Framework's objectives for achieving well-designed places.

Other Matters

10. I am aware that the proposal seeks to improve upon the useable loft space that would be achieved by implementing the extant planning permission (Ref 59558/001) granted in May 2023 for development described as '*Dormer windows to rear with pitch roofs and roof lights to the front and rear roof slopes*'. However, any benefits to the appellants through modifications to the approved design do not outweigh the harm that I have identified.
11. My attention has been drawn to the use of flat roof dormer windows on a new development within Alton town centre but I have no details or knowledge of the context in that case and it does not alter my conclusions upon the merits of the appeal that is before me.

Conclusion

12. For the reasons given, I find that the proposal would be harmful to the character and appearance of 3 Murray Grove and the wider area. The harm that I have identified and conflict with local and national planning policy means that the proposal would fail to represent a sustainable form of development. Accordingly, and having regard to all other matters raised, the appeal is dismissed.

John D Allan

INSPECTOR