The Planning Inspectorate

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 27 November 2023

by Les Greenwood MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date:15.12.2023

Appeal Ref: APP/Y1945/D/23/3331261
5A Euston Avenue, Watford, Hertfordshire WD18 7SZ

- 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 Muhammed Riasat Bhatti against the decision of Watford Borough Council.
- The application Ref 23/00426/FULH, dated 9 May 2023, was refused by notice dated 25 July 2023.
- The development proposed is a loft conversion with erection of a rear dormer window.

Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for a loft conversion with erection of a rear dormer window in accordance with the terms of the application Ref 23/00426/FULH, dated 9 May 2023, 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: 01/04, 02/04, 03/04, 04/04 and 06/06.

   3) The materials to be used in the construction of the vertical external surfaces of the dormer window structure hereby permitted shall match those used in the existing roof.

Main issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the appeal building and the local area.

Reasons

3. 5A Euston Avenue is a first floor flat over a barber's shop, within a 2 storey mid-terrace building near to the junction with Queens Avenue. The proposal to convert the loft includes construction of a flat roofed box dormer window structure on the rear roof slope and the addition of 2 rooflights at the front.

4. Paragraph 8.12 of the Council's Residential Design Guide (RDG) advises that dormer windows must be in proportion to the size of the original roof and should not exceed half the height or half the width of the roof. The proposed dormer structure would go substantially beyond this guidance, occupying most of the height and almost the full width of the existing, modestly sized rear roof.

5. The proposed dormer would nevertheless fit in well with surrounding development. Immediately to one side are 2 very similar dormer structures which though not in line with the RDG's guidance, are an unremarkable part of the established character of this row of buildings. To the other side is the gable wall of a much taller 3 storey building. The new dormer would not be seen from Euston Avenue. Part of it would be seen over the top of a commercial garage in views from Queens Avenue, but only in the context of these other equivalent or larger structures.

6. The building itself, though possibly 19th Century, is not of such architectural quality or detailing that there would be any overriding harm to its form or appearance. Like the Council, I see no objection to the 2 rooflights, which would be similar to existing rooflights on adjacent houses.

7. Notwithstanding the conflict with the detailed guidance at paragraph 8.12 of the RDG, I conclude that the proposal would not harm the character or appearance of the appeal building or the local area. It accords with Watford Local Plan 2021-2038 policies QD6.2 and QD6.4, RDG paragraph 8.2 and the National Planning Policy Framework, which aim to achieve high quality design and visually attractive buildings, with extensions that respect the character and scale of the host building.

8. A neighbour raises concerns that increased occupancy of No 5A would exacerbate existing local parking pressures and would not create a good standard of living for occupiers. Euston Avenue is part of a Residents' Parking Zone and at least at the time of my site visit on a Monday morning there was good availability of parking spaces. I have not seen any evidence to show that local parking issues are so severe that the proposal would cause significant problems. The Council has not raised any concerns about the standard of accommodation that would be provided, and I can see no reason why this would be sub-standard.

9. I impose a condition specifying the relevant plans to provide certainty. A condition requiring the use of matching materials for the dormer is needed to protect local character and appearance.

10. For the reasons set out above, and having regard to all other matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should succeed.

Les Greenwood

INSPECTOR