



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 17 January 2024

By Terrence Kemmann-Lane JP DipTP FRTPI MCMI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 07 February 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/B5480/D/23/3331015

149 Squirrels Heath Road, Romford, RM3 0NT

- 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 Mohan V against the decision of Havering London Borough Council.
 - The application Ref P0821.23, dated 23 May 2023, was refused by notice dated 19 July 2023.
 - The development proposed is conversion of loft space involving a rear dormer and additional roof light to the front elevation.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue in this case is the effect of the proposed dormer on the street scene, the rear garden environment and the surrounding area.

Reasons

3. The appeal site is a 2-storey detached house that has a 2-storey side extension with a small gabled dormer window in the western roof slope. It occupies a corner plot at the junction of Squirrels Heath Road with Athelstan Road. Its long axis is built at right-angles to Squirrels Heath Road, with its front elevation facing that road. It stands forward of the building line in Squirrels Heath Road. The east side elevation looks towards Athelstan Road, across the main private open space, enclosed by a high boundary wall. There is a pedestrian entrance in the wall facing onto Squirrels Heath Road. The upper part of the east, south and west elevations of the house are fully visible from the public highway. It is within a residential area, of mainly 2-storey dwellings in a variety of styles and designs.
4. The council's Residential Extensions and Alterations Supplementary Planning Document (SPD), adopted in 2011, is clearly the most relevant local planning document in this case. Of particular relevance to the appeal proposal is the guidance that "*Dormer windows should normally be located facing the rear garden so they are not visible from the street and do not harm the appearance or character of the original house.*" (paragraph 8.2) and "*Dormers should be contained well within the body of the roof, by being set well back from the eaves, and by setting the sides well in from any gables or party walls. Dormers must never extend above the ridge line of the roof and should be located well below it.*" (paragraph 8.3).

5. The proposed dormer window does not meet this guidance. It would be in full view from Squirrels Heath Road, would extend across the full width of the house, from gable to gable, and the back of the flat roof would meet the main roof just below the ridge tiles (as shown on the application plans, although the appeal statement refers to it being 0.200m below the ridge). It would only rise a short distance (0.325m) above the eaves.
6. The appeal statement argues that to have the dormer roof 'well below the ridge' would limit the internal ceiling height, but the practicality of the internal ceiling height is not a matter that outweighs the effect of appearance on the streetscene and area generally. It is also claimed that it would be within the 50 cubic metres allowed under permitted development (PD) rights, although acknowledging that in this case these rights do not apply because the existing roof is larger than the original roof. I have not been given the cubic content of the 'non original roof' over the side extension, but it appears to me that it would not be of modest volume in relation to the 50 cubic metre limit. I cannot see, therefore, how this can be claimed to be a 'fallback position'.
7. Although the SPD can be described as guidance, and that there will be occasions when departure from it can be justified, I do not find that to be so in this case. The proposed dormer would have a width of 9.98m, a depth of 3.69m and a height of 2.585m, and as described in paragraph 5 above, it would occupy the full width of the west side of the roof, extending down from just below the ridge tiles. In descriptive terms, rather than the measurements, it is only reasonable to depict it as excessively wide, having a scale, bulk and mass that would dominate this very public elevation.
8. I do not find the suggestion that there are other flat roofed dormers in the area, that justify the appeal proposal, is persuasive when viewed against the visual harm of the proposal. Furthermore, the policy in the development plan and the National Planning Policy Framework for good design is not limited to those areas which have 'heritage constraints'. The government policy is clearly to lift the quality of design throughout the country. I have also taken account of the suggestion that since the roof of the existing extension mimics the original roof, the wide dormer is justified, but this does not sway me.

Conclusions

9. For the reasons that I have set out above, the proposed dormer would be excessively wide, having a scale, bulk and mass that would dominate this very public elevation, consequently having a harmful effect on the existing dwelling, the street scene, rear garden environment and the surrounding area. For these reasons I will dismiss the appeal.

Terrence Kemmann-Lane

INSPECTOR