



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 19 June 2024

by V Goldberg BSc (Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 13 August 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/K3605/W/23/3336004

31 & 32 Prospect Road, Long Ditton, Surbiton, KT6 5PY

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Ms Amy Fox and Ms Sophie Pepper against the decision of Elmbridge Borough Council.
 - The application Ref is 2023/2259.
 - The development proposed is a loft conversion including raising the roof and internal alterations to No 31 and 32 Prospect Road
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of No 31 and 32 Prospect Road and the street scene.

Reasons

3. The appeal site comprises a pair of semi-detached dwellings (no 31 and 32) fronting Prospect Road, a residential street, characterised by brick built semi-detached dwellings on one side, and smaller terraced houses on the other. While some dwellings in the locality have been subject to roof level alterations, the prevailing pattern, particularly of semi-detached pairs, are hipped roofs. Despite some differences in detailing and pattern, there is a consistency in the age, rhythm and materials of buildings along Prospect Road that positively contribute to its traditional character and cohesive appearance.
4. Situated mid-way along Prospect Road, No 31 and 32 share an overall frontage symmetry, brick and slate materials, and shallow hipped roof as other pairs on the same side of the street. That said, No 31 and No 32 have different overall proportions, emphasised tall end stacks and central entrance ways, which cause the pair to slightly stand out in the Prospect Road street scene.
5. The proposal would alter the existing roof line, raising the ridge height and width to create a gable roof with four rooflights. The submitted 'street views' plan shows the proposed roof line would be broadly similar in height to the terraces on the opposite side of Prospect Road. Nevertheless, relative to the semi-detached pairs on the same side of the road, the proposal would add significant roof-level bulk and a top-heavy appearance. The gable roof form would be at odds with the prevailing pattern of development, which would accentuate No 31 and 32 and cause the pair to appear awkwardly out of place.

6. Both No 31 and 32 have been subject to side and rear extensions, although at roof level the pitched roof, tall brick end stacks and rear central stacks are characteristic features. The proposal would introduce a large dormer that would extend across most of the rear roof slope, set just below the ridge and very slightly in from the gable ends. Despite an overall balance in the size and position, the scale and mass of the proposed dormer would dominate the rear elevation of No 31 and No 32, and integration of the end chimney stacks within the new roof form would be to the detriment of the pair's traditional form and character.
7. Despite the angle of the roof pitch, symmetry and materials, and that taller buildings and hip-to-gable extensions exist in the wider area, overall, the increased height, form and scale of roof level changes would harm the character and appearance of No 31 and No 32, as well as the Prospect Road street scene. The proposed development therefore runs contrary to Policy CS17 of the Core Strategy 2011, Policy DM2 of the Development Management Plan 2015, insofar as they expect new development delivers high quality design that integrates sensitively with the locally distinctive townscape and street scene; and preserves or enhances the character of the area, taking into account the prevailing pattern of built development.
8. There would also be conflict with the policies of the National Planning Policy Framework, 2023 that seek to achieve well-designed and beautiful places. Also, the Council's Design and Character Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) Companion Guide: Home Extensions, April 2012; and Design and Character (SPD), 2012 insofar the guidance seeks to ensure development responds to the character of a building and the streetscape; and for new extensions to harmonise with the original appearance of a house and street scene.

Other Matters

9. I have been made aware of other examples of hip-to-gable and rear dormer extensions on Prospect Road. While I do not know the specific planning or policy considerations behind these, I note that Nos. 8, 12 and 24 are all terrace properties on the opposite side of the street, which do not reflect the development pattern characterised by semi-detached pairs. No 37 is one half of a semi-detached pair that features a hip to gable and rear box dormer. However, the extensions in that case do not appear to have altered the ridge height and the attached neighbour has retained its traditional hipped roof. Even if there are other rear dormer extensions locally, it is not demonstrably clear that these replicate the scale and extent of the dormer proposed. I have also considered the findings of the Inspector deciding the appeal at 8 Prospect Road (APP/K3605/D/20/3253782). However, none of the above provide useful justification for the harm the appeal scheme would cause. Nor does the existence of a taller hotel and commercial buildings nearby; or the support for the proposals from interested parties.
10. It has been put to me that under permitted development rights (PD), each dwelling could be extended to achieve up to an additional 50 cubic metres of roof space. However, the indicative drawing of a potential PD scheme shows a significantly lower ridge, shallower pitch, and materially less overall scale and bulk compared to the proposal before me. In any event, I have decided the appeal scheme on the basis that planning permission was sought; as well as

the evidence, merits and site-specific circumstances relevant to the case before me.

11. It is also argued that increasing the size of each dwelling by one bedroom would mitigate moving to a different catchment area and improve the mix of house sizes in the local area. However, without evidence of actual supply and mix, the potential need for more four-bedroomed houses is anecdotal. Moreover, bearing in mind that the principle of a dormer or hip-to-gable is not objected to by the Council per se, and the arguments made in respect of PD, it casts doubt whether additional accommodation and the benefits to the appellants and housing mix could not be achieved in less harmful ways. These arguments attract very little weight in favour of the appeal scheme. I have however still considered whether dismissing the appeal would ultimately interfere with the occupiers' rights to a private and family life and home under Article 8(2) of the Human Rights Act 1998.

Conclusion

12. For the reasons given above, the proposed development conflicts with the development plan as a whole and the material considerations do not indicate that the appeal should be decided other than in accordance with it. I consider that my decision to dismiss the appeal on the basis of conflict with the development plan and the harm I have found in respect of the character and appearance, is proportionate.
13. I therefore conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

V Goldberg

INSPECTOR