



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 17 June 2025

by J Heppell BA (Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 16TH July 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/E5330/W/25/3361663

Flat 2, 85 Plum Lane, Plumstead, Greenwich SE18 3AG

- 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 Mr Manj Gilson of Gilson Homes against the decision of the Royal Borough of Greenwich.
 - The application Ref is 24/3988.
 - The development was originally described as “proposed rooms in the roof”.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. To better describe the proposal, I have used the following description of development, based on the Council’s decision notice: “Construction of L-shaped dormer roof extension to the rear roof slope and outrigger and addition of 2no. roof lights to the front roof slope of the upper storey flat.”
3. Whilst I was not able to gain access to the property on my site visit, I was able to gain a sufficient understanding of the design and layout of the property and its neighbours, and the character of the wider area, from public vantage points.

Main Issues

4. The main issues in this appeal are the effect of the proposal on:
 - the character and appearance of the host property and the surrounding area; and
 - the living conditions of 83 Plum Lane with particular reference to light, outlook and sense of enclosure.

Reasons

Character and appearance

5. The appeal site is a two storey mid terrace property with a rear outrigger, located in an area of terraced houses. The property has been subdivided into two flats; the proposal is to extend the upper floor flat into the roof space to create two bedrooms.
6. The proposal rear extension would be nearly the same height as the ridge of the existing roof and run the full width of the property, with a similar roof extension

over the first section of the outrigger. By extending the building upwards and terminating it with a flat roof, the proposal would significantly alter the roof shape of the dwelling and as a consequence the appearance of the property itself. The proposed roof lights at the front of the property would result in only a minor change to the appearance of the property.

7. The Royal Borough of Greenwich Urban Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document adopted in October 2023 (UDG) provides guidance on loft/roof extensions and is a material consideration. It advises that roof extensions should generally follow and complement the pattern and pitch of the main roof and be secondary in scale to the main roof, whilst seeking to preserve or enhance the existing appearance in terms of height, scale and visual impact.
8. By projecting above the existing pitched roof and to all intents and purposes replacing it (apart from one section of the outrigger), the proposal would dominate the roof of the building when seen from the rear. The proposal would not follow the existing form of the pitched roof and would not be secondary in scale to the roof, instead creating an alien and incongruous feature to the detriment of the character and appearance of the property and the wider area.
9. Although located at the rear of the property, the proposal would be visible from a number of properties in Plum Lane and Admaston Road, and would be clearly visible from the public highway in Hinstock Road, which is elevated in relation to the appeal site. Whilst a number of neighbouring properties have rear extensions, I did not observe any examples of flat roofed extensions built to the full height of the existing property. The degree of visibility of the proposed roof extension from the public highway would serve to magnify the resultant harm to the character and appearance of the area.
10. The appellant has stated that similar extensions have occurred locally, including on the opposite side of Plum Lane, which the Council attributes mainly to the use of “permitted development” rights. I have not been provided with the addresses of these properties and I therefore do not know the extent to which the rear elevations of these properties are visible from the public highway, and consequently the degree to which the extensions impact on the public realm. Therefore I accord them limited weight in the planning balance.
11. The appellant has highlighted that roof extensions can, in appropriate circumstances, be added to dwellinghouses without the need for planning permission. As the host property has been subdivided into flats, it does not benefit from such “permitted development” rights. I note that the appellant has indicated that they may change the property back to a single dwelling to take advantage of “permitted development” rights, but as this is not the current situation the utilisation of such rights is a merely theoretical prospect, and I therefore accord this limited weight in the planning balance.
12. Likewise, the fact that planning permission has previously been granted for two gabled dormer windows at the rear¹ carries limited weight, since that proposal was for modest, well-proportioned dormer windows sitting below the ridge line and above the eaves line, in compliance with the detailed guidance on roof extensions contained in the subsequently-adopted UDG. I note that the planning permission

¹ LPA reference 20/0033/F

included rooflights on the front of the property, similar to those currently proposed, indicating the acceptability of this aspect of the proposal.

13. The appellant has stated that the proposal would make the upper floor flat more sustainable by creating a two bed three person flat which accords with the National Space Standards. However, there is no indication that the first floor flat currently provides substandard accommodation and that there is an overriding need to extend it.
14. The appellant has referred to the design guidelines contained in the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework). The Framework advises that development that is not well designed should be refused, especially where it fails to reflect local design policies and government guidance, taking into account local design guidance and supplementary planning documents. As the proposal does not comply with local design guidance and is not well designed, it should be refused.
15. I conclude that the proposal would have an unacceptable adverse impact on the character and appearance of the area, in conflict with Policy D3 of the London Plan and policies DH1 and DH(a) of the Royal Greenwich Core Strategy with Detailed Policies (CS) adopted 30th July 2014. Together these policies seek a high quality of design, with rear additions limited to a scale and design appropriate to the building and locality, including avoiding flat roofs on rear extensions when they would be visible from the public highway.

Living conditions of 83 Plum Lane

16. The adjoining 83 Plum Lane (No 83) would have originally been a mirror image of the appeal property, being a two storey terraced property whose rear outrigger faces the outrigger of the appeal property, with a lower floor level than the appeal property. It has windows at ground and first floor on the rear elevation of the main house and on the side elevation of the outrigger, which the proposed roof extension would face towards.
17. Whilst the outlook from the rear of No 83 is already enclosed by the outrigger of the appeal property, the proposed roof extension would increase the existing sense of enclosure and worsen the outlook from No 83. The amount of daylight reaching the rear of No 83 would be reduced and, since the proposal would be located approximately south of No 83, the possibility of direct sunlight reaching No 83 in the early part of the day would be reduced. All these adverse impacts would be exacerbated by the change in levels between the two properties.
18. The UDG advises that roof extensions should not compromise the daylight to adjacent properties and should only be permitted if the impact on the neighbour's daylight and sunlight would be negligible. The UDG includes a diagram (Figure 1.37) which illustrates that a roof extension above a terraced house and outrigger, such as that proposed, can cause loss of daylight to neighbouring properties. The appellant has not submitted a daylight/sunlight study to demonstrate that the impact on No 83's daylight and sunlight would be negligible, and in the absence of such a study, the available evidence indicates that the impact on No 83 would be more than negligible and therefore unacceptable.
19. Consequently, I conclude that the proposal would fail to provide suitable living conditions for the occupiers of 83 Plum Lane, contrary to Policy DH(b) of the D6 of

the CS, which seeks to avoid an unacceptable loss of amenity to adjacent occupiers from a reduction in the amount of daylight or sunlight or an unneighbourly sense of enclosure.

Other Matters

20. The appellant considers that the impact of the proposal on the amenities of No 83 can only be assessed by a site visit, and that the Council's use of digital measurement would not have allowed it to assess the amenities currently enjoyed by No 83 or appreciate the use of the rooms which the affected windows serve.
21. Whilst it is for the Council to determine how it assesses planning applications, the plans make it clear what the relationship of the proposal with No 83 would be. Since the proposal would affect the windows on both the rear elevation of the main house and the side elevation of the outrigger, the precise function of the affected rooms is not essential to determining that there would be a loss of light and outlook from the rear of the house.

Conclusion

22. For the reasons given above the appeal should be dismissed.

J Heppell

INSPECTOR