

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 12 April 2022

by G Robbie BA(Hons) BPI MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 06 May 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/R5510/W/21/3288792

40A Windmill Hill, Ruislip HA4 8PX

- 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 Michael Greenwald against the decision of London Borough of Hillingdon.
 - The application Ref 15193/APP/2021/2180, dated 2 February 2021, was refused by notice dated 22 July 2021.
 - The development proposed is Conversion of roof space to habitable accommodation with front dormer and rear rooflights.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matters

2. It is noted that the appellant's Grounds of Appeal document contains an extract of 'substitute drawings' which shows an alternative version of the proposed rear dormer extension with reduced dimensions. It is not however the role of the appeal process to evolve a scheme and it is important that what is considered at the appeal stage is essentially what was considered by the Council, and also upon which interested people's views were sought. I have therefore determined the appeal on the basis of the plans upon which the application was made.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the host building and the surrounding area.

Reasons

4. The appeal building is a two-storey building hosting a total of four flats; two at ground floor and two at first floor. It is a modest and unexceptional building with a discrete presence on Windmill Hill, albeit with a pleasing sense of order, rhythm and symmetry to its fenestration pattern to both front and rear elevations.
5. The proposed dormer window extension would be located on the left-hand half of the building's rear-facing roof slope. Although it would be set in from the extremities of the roof and from the roof's mid-point, it would nevertheless be a considerable size. As such it would have a significant physical and visual presence within the rear roof slope and would dominate the rear of the building in a manner at odds with its otherwise simple detailing and modest proportions.

6. The appellant has referred to a sketch diagram showing a dormer window with insets / set-downs, explaining that it is from the Council's 'original residential design guidance', as justification for the proposal's design approach. However, the Council do not refer specifically to residential design guidance or any specific supplementary planning documents, whilst the supporting text to, and policy wording of, LP2 policy DMHD1 is clear in how roof extensions should be assessed.
7. In this context, the proposed dormer window would be a substantial and dominant feature within the rear roof slope. Whilst located below existing ridge tiles it would fail to retain a substantial element of the original roof slope of the appeal property and would be neither subservient to the scale of the existing roof of the appeal property, nor to the building as a whole. It would, thus, be an incongruous 'over-large' extension that would fail to respect the otherwise modest proportions and simple design of the existing building or harmonise with surrounding local context.
8. Given the layout and form of the existing building it is somewhat inevitable that a proposal of this nature would not be centralised within the building's overall roof slope, resulting in the unbalanced rear elevation the Council fear. However, in itself this is neither particularly harmful nor fatal to the proposal.
9. Rather, it is the scale and slab-fronted / sided proportions of the proposed dormer together with its limited insets and set-downs that ensure it would be a disruptive and intrusive roof alteration on an otherwise modestly plan and architecturally simple building. As a consequence the proposed dormer window extension would be excessively scaled and overly large within the context of the appeal property and existing building and would dominate the rear roof slope and rear elevation of the building. Nor would it be truly subservient to the scale of the existing roof slope.
10. Together, these factors lead me to the conclusion that the proposal would cause harm to the character and appearance of the host building and to the surrounding area. For these reasons the proposal would be contrary to LP2 policy DMHD1, particularly (E)(i) and (ii) and would also fail to secure high quality design in the manner sought by Local Plan Part 1 policy BE1 and LP2 policy DMHB11.
11. Rear dormer windows are not particularly common features amongst the rear elevations of surrounding properties. Whilst I noted the presence of a limited number of examples of dormer windows during my visit to the site, I saw that they were of a different scale, proportion and layout to the appeal proposal in this instance. They do not provide a sufficiently strong justification for the scale, form and layout of the appeal proposal or for the harm that would arise from the proposal.
12. There would be no harm arising from the proposed installation of the rooflight windows to the front facing roof slope as they would be modest additions thereto, but this is not sufficient to justify the harm that would arise from the rear dormer window element of the appeal proposal.

Other Matters

13. I understand the desire of the appellant to extend the property to provide additional and flexible accommodation for a young family and visiting relatives.

However, this reason behind the application does not persuade me to find the submitted scheme acceptable.

14. I have also noted the appellant's frustration with the Council in terms of communication and correspondence. However, this is not a material consideration to which I give any significant weight.

Conclusion

15. For the reasons set out, and having considered all other matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

G Robbie

INSPECTOR