Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 23 July 2019

by A M Nilsson BA (Hons) DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 14 August 2019

Appeal Ref: APP/X5210/W/19/3229150
14 Eton Garages, London NW3 4PE

- 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 Mrs V McFadyen against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Camden.
- The application Ref 2018/6361/P, dated 7 February 2019, was refused by notice dated 17 April 2019.
- The development proposed is described as enlargement of existing front dormer window, addition of inset balcony to the rear second floor level, installation of two rooflights to the rear, replacement of timber sash and casement to the first floor front elevation with all new double glazed timber sash, replacement of metal casements to the first floor rear elevation with all new double glazed timber casement, proposed internal alterations.

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 the host building and the surrounding area with particular regard to the character and appearance of the Belsize Conservation Area.

Reasons

3. The appeal property is located on Eton Garages that comprises mews style buildings. There are commercial uses in the street however the area appears to have evolved to be mainly residential. Many of the properties on Eton Garages have been altered over time with many containing dormer windows and other roof alterations. The appeal property occupies the first floor and attic level and contains an existing dormer window that fronts onto Eton Garages with rooflights on the rear elevation that fronts onto Lambolle Place. The appeal property is located within the Belsize Conservation Area (the Conservation Area) that is characterised predominantly by residential properties of various sizes and styles.

4. The proposal includes a number of elements, however, it is the proposed dormer window which is cited in the reason for refusal and is central to the appeal. I concur with the Council that the other elements of the proposed development would not cause harm to the character or appearance of the property or the Conservation Area.

5. The proposed dormer window would replace an existing dormer window on the front elevation. The existing dormer window does not relate well to the first-floor fenestration. The proposed dormer window would be almost double the width of the existing dormer window and would contain a central section set-back from the larger two side sections. However, as shown on the roof plan the set-back would be relatively small in terms of the overall depth and would not serve to significantly reduce the overall scale of the dormer window. The width of the proposed dormer window would result in it having a bulky appearance and create an incongruous feature in the roofscape.

6. The proposed dormer window would dominate the roof of the property and whilst it would not extend beyond the width of the first-floor windows, it would not relate well to the vertical proportions of the first floor.

7. The proposed dormer window would therefore have an unacceptable impact on the character and appearance of the host property and the surrounding area and fail to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Conservation Area. As such the proposal would be contrary to Policies D1 and D2 of the London Borough of Camden Local Plan (adopted July 2017). These policies seek, amongst other things, to secure high-quality design, and that development within conservation areas, preserves or enhances the character or appearance of the area. The proposal would also be contrary to the Camden Planning Guidance, Altering and extending your home (Supplementary Planning Document) (March 2019) which states, amongst other things, that roof dormers should not dominate the roof plane, should be subordinate in size to the main roof, and should be generally aligned with windows on the lower floors and be of a size that is clearly subordinate to the windows below.

Other Matters

8. My attention has been drawn to other dormer windows on properties in the street, some of which are similar to the appeal proposal. I observed these on my site visit. However, according to the Council, these have been installed in the 1980's or 1990's and were subject to a different policy framework or have been installed without planning permission. In any event, some of those that I saw served to confirm that poorly designed dormer windows do harm the character and appearance of the host property and the surrounding area. Although I have had regard to their presence, I have also considered the appeal proposal on its individual merits. On this point, the Camden Planning Guidance, Altering and extending your home (Supplementary Planning Document) (March 2019) states that the presence of unsuitably designed new or altered dormers on neighbouring properties will not serve as a precedent for further development of the same kind.

9. The appellant has referred me to the dormers at 8 Eton Garages that were allowed on appeal in 1993. I do not have full details of this case. I do however consider that the policy context has changed to such a degree since this decision that it has little weight in my decision. Although I have taken the quoted Inspectors comments into account, I have also considered the appeal proposal on its individual merits.

Planning Balance and Conclusion

10. Having regard to paragraph 196 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) I find that the harm to the Conservation Area is relatively localised

and therefore the proposal would cause less than substantial harm to the significance of the Conservation Area. I do not, however, find that this harm is outweighed by any public benefits of the proposal.

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

A M Nilsson

INSPECTOR