



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 8 July 2013

by S Holden BSc MSc CEng TPP MRTPI FCIHT

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government

Decision date: 15 July 2013

Appeal Ref: APP/Q1445/D/13/2196767

1 Hillcrest, Brighton, BN1 5FP

- 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 A Embling against the decision of Brighton & Hove City Council.
 - The application Ref BH2013/00328 was refused by notice dated 4 April 2013.
 - The development proposed is erection of ground floor side extension, extension to roof incorporating front, rear and side dormers.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary matters

2. An application for a side extension and insertion of a series of dormer windows in the front, side and rear roof slopes at the appeal property was refused by the Council in May 2012, Ref: BH2012/01066. The scheme was subsequently dismissed on appeal on the grounds that the front dormer windows would detract from the character and appearance of the pair of dwellings, Ref: APP/Q1445/D/12/2178201. Following this, the Council granted planning permission for a revised proposal comprising a side extension, a front dormer window to match that on the adjoining property (No 3) and another dormer window in each of the side and rear roof slopes, Ref: BH2012/03212. The current proposal seeks further amendments to the side and rear dormer windows and alterations to the roof of the ground floor side extension of the property.

Main issue

3. Having regard to the Inspector's comments on the previous scheme, the Council assessed the side extension within the current proposal and found it to be acceptable. I see no reason to take a different view. The main issue in this appeal is therefore the effect of the proposed side and rear dormer windows on the character and appearance of the host property and the surrounding area.

Reasons

4. 1 Hillcrest is a semi-detached bungalow on a triangular shaped plot. It is in a prominent position on the brow of a hill and is highly visible on the approach from Fairview Rise. The other half of the pair (No 3) has already been altered with the insertion of a dormer window in the front roof slope. The front dormer window in the approved scheme will match that on No 3.

5. The revised side facing dormer window would be both wider and taller than the dormer in the extant permission. The roof slope in which the window would be placed is of very modest proportions, so although these changes would be small in dimensional terms, they would nevertheless affect the appearance of the dormer window. Firstly, the dormer would be sited higher up the slope and closer to the edges of the roof and the ridge of the existing dwelling. This would make it appear less subordinate to the host property and more prominent from the surrounding area. Secondly, the design would include dormer cheeks, which would be on either side of the glazed section resulting in the overall appearance of the dormer being more bulky than the approved scheme. I am therefore not persuaded that the need to comply with the building regulations is a justification for the increased size or altered position of the proposed dormer window.
6. The Councils Supplementary Planning Guidance: *Roof Alterations and Extensions* (SPG) provides a series of principles to be applied to the assessment of new dormer windows. Not all of these are relevant to the appeal proposal. However, the overarching aim of this guidance is to ensure that dormer windows do not dominate the original building and properly respect the proportions and features of the host property. In particular it advises that dormers should be kept as small as possible.
7. To my mind the appeal proposal would not comply with this advice. Instead its enlarged width and height, combined with its altered position in the roof slope would make it a dominant feature that would be out of proportion with the modestly sized side roof slope. I acknowledge that views of the side roof slope of the bungalow are partially obscured by the garage and also by the position of the adjoining dwelling in Redhill Drive. However, it would be seen from elsewhere in Redhill Drive and Fairview Rise from where its overall bulk and the height of its ridge would be apparent. Consequently, it would appear as an overly large and incongruous addition to this modest dwelling.
8. The proposed rear dormer would be enlarged to match the overall size of that which has been approved for insertion in the front roof slope. I understand that this may appear logical to the appellant and accept that it would improve the internal layout of the loft conversion.
9. However, the proposal is for a large and bulky dormer. It would be both wider and deeper than that which has been approved by application BH2012/03212 and would occupy a significantly larger proportion of the rear roof slope. It would include substantial areas of cladding and incorporate a section of flat roof. Consequently, it would dominate the modestly proportioned rear roof slope to the detriment of the appearance of the dwelling as a whole. In these respects the enlarged dormer window would also fail to comply with the guidance set out in the SPG.
10. Furthermore, No 3 has no rear facing dormer window but includes only two small roof lights. In this regard the insertion of a dormer of the size proposed would appear particularly intrusive alongside the smaller rear roof slope of the adjoining bungalow. I appreciate that the appellant wants to harmonise the appearance of the two dormers. However, since the front and rear roof slopes cannot be seen simultaneously there is no requirement for the dormer windows to be identical to one another in order to provide visual symmetry. In my view the benefits that this would bring to the internal layout of the loft conversion would be outweighed by the harm to the appearance of the dwelling.

11. On my site visit I saw that there were some larger dormers on other nearby properties in Hillcrest. However, the Council has suggested that these were most likely to have been built as permitted development. Their presence is therefore not a justification for permitting a scheme that is contrary to the Council's current advice and policies.
12. I therefore conclude that the side and rear dormer windows would be harmful to the character and appearance of the host property and the surrounding area. They would fail to comply with saved Policy QD14 of the Brighton & Hove Local Plan, which seeks to ensure that extensions and alterations to existing buildings are well designed, sited and detailed in relation to the host property and the surrounding area. The proposal would also be contrary to the advice set out in the Council's SPG.
13. The National Planning Policy Framework (The Framework) sets out the Government's approach to securing sustainable development and confirms that applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the development plan. The Framework also states that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development and that permission should be refused for development of poor design that fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area. The proposal would therefore be contrary to the advice of the Framework.

Conclusion

14. For these reasons, and having regard to all other relevant matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Sheila Holden

INSPECTOR

