

An Bord Pleanála



Inspector's Report

Reference: PL06S.246338

P.A. Reference: SD15B/0378

Title: Attic conversion with alterations to roof profile at rear and side. New gambrel roof style dormer extension to rear to include 3 velux style windows and new gable wall extension.

Location: 15 Woodville Walk, Lucan, Co. Dublin.

Applicant: Lisa Scahill

Appellant: Lisa Scahill

Observers: None

PA: South Dublin County Council

Type of Appeal: First party against decision to refuse

Decision: Refusal

Date of Site Visit: 9th June 2016

Inspector: Philip Davis

1. Introduction

This appeal is by the applicant against the decision of the planning authority to refuse permission for attic conversion to a house which includes alterations to the roof profile. There are three reasons for refusal, the main issue relating to the impact on the streetscape of the proposed new roofline.

2. Site Description

Photographs of the site and environs are attached in the appendix to this report.

Woodville Walk, Lucan, Dublin

Woodville Walk is a small cul-de-sac road within a late 20th Century estate just north of Junction 2 (Lucan) on the N4 and under a kilometre east of the old village centre of Lucan. It is within a triangular shaped area bounded by the N4 and the R853 Lucan Road. The general area is mostly residential with one Eir office and compound to the west along with a school and sports ground, in addition to a branch of Woodies DIY on the main junction to the east with a hospital to the north. The overall area is mature and leafy. There are 20 dwellings on Woodville Walk, 18 of which are semi-detached 2 storey units with front gardens, with two detached dwellings of apparently slightly more recent origin on what were corner plots at the entrance to the cul-de-sac.

The site and environs

The appeal site, no. 15 Woodville Walk, is on the north side of the street on a site with an area given as 0.0188 hectares and is the eastern half of a semi-detached pair (note that the site map originally submitted with the application identifies the house incorrectly). It is a typical 2 storey 2-bay hipped roof dwelling of the period.

3. Proposal

The proposed development is described on the site notice as follows:

An attic conversion with alterations to the existing roof profile at the rear and side. Alterations of the roof profile to include a new gambrel roof style dormer extension to the rear, to include 3 new velux style windows and a new gable wall extension to the side to replace existing hipped roof to accommodate two new bedrooms. It is also proposed to include three new velux style windows to the unchanged front roof profile and all ancillary site works and drainage.

4. Technical Reports and other planning file correspondence

Planning application

The planning application, with plans and supporting documentation was submitted to the planning authority on the 23rd December 2015.

Internal and external correspondence

Water Services: No objection subject to conditions on drainage.

Irish Water: No objection subject to conditions relating to drainage and water supply.

Planning report: The planners report notes the zoning objective A 'to protect and/or improve residential amenity' and notes policies with respect to extensions in dwelling houses (Policy H16) and the 'House Extension Design Guide' 2010. It notes that Section 4 of the Guide states that '*extending a hipped roof to the side... will rarely be acceptable*'. It concludes that the proposed roof profile would be at variance with the predominant pattern of roof profiles in the surrounding area. It also notes that the red line boundary as submitted is wrong. Refusal is recommended.

5. Decision

Refusal for three reasons, which I summarise as follows:

1. *The design would be at variance with the hipped roof profiles in the area and would thus materially contravene the provisions of the SDCC Development Plan 2010-2016 and would adversely impact the visual amenity of the surrounding streetscapes.*
2. *It would set an undesirable precedent.*
3. *The red line boundary indicated is inaccurate.*

6. Planning Context

Planning permissions – appeal site

No records on file.

Planning permissions – adjoining areas

No relevant records on file. The appellant refers to a recently permitted Dutch roof gable end profile as part of a side extension to on no. 19 Woodville Walk (**SD14B/0278**).

Development Plan

The appeal site is zoned residential 'objective A' in the South County Dublin Development Plan 2010-2016. In such areas the objective is 'To protect and/or improve Residential Amenity'. Policy H16 sets out guidelines for house extensions and the Council publish a guide to house extensions in the area which is within the appendix to the development plan.

Relevant extracts from the Development Plan are attached in the appendix to this report.

7. Grounds of Appeal

- It is argued that the proposed gambrel roof profile is less repetitive than Dutch roofs – it is submitted that it is superior in visual terms and space usage than a dormer or similar. It is argued that it is consistent with policy H16 and the house extension guidelines.
- It is argued that it would balance with the permitted 'Dutch roof gable end profile' with dormer to the rear as granted for 19 Woodville Walk (**SD14B/0278**), which, it is argued, has set a precedent for alterations to roof profiles on the street.
- It is denied that it is a bulky form, it is argued that it is superior for interior space use than other forms.
- A revised red line boundary site plan is submitted with regard to reason no.3 for refusal.

8. Planning Authority's Comments

The planning authority refers the Board to the planners report.

9. Assessment

Having inspected the site and reviewed the file documents, I consider that the appeal can be addressed under the following headings:

- **Legal issues**
- **Principle of development**
- **Overall context and design**
- **Residential amenity**
- **Appropriate Assessment and EIA**
- **Other issues**

Legal issues

The third reason for refusal related to an inaccurate site plan – it indicated the adjoining house as the application site. The appellant has attached a corrected plan with the appeal. While I would normally consider an application and appeal to be invalid if accompanied by such an inaccurate plan, I would consider that in this context there is no evidence that any local residents would have been confused or misled by the application as a site notice was presumably erected and the address of the property is clearly identifiable. However, as there is the possibility of either a refusal or grant being attached to the wrong property on the planning record I recommend that the Board attach a note to the decision order indicating unambiguously that it applies to no.15 Woodville Walk only.

I note that the planning authority refused for the reason of a 'material contravention'. However, there is a certain element of ambiguity over which part of the development plan it is considered to have been 'materially' contravened, so in this respect I conclude that the requirements of S.37(2) of the 2000 Act, as amended, does not apply.

Principle of development

The appeal site is zoned residential, for the protection of residential amenities. The relevant policy on house extensions is H16:

It is the policy of the Council to support the extension of existing dwelling houses in principle subject to safeguards contained within this Plan and within the House Extension Design Guide document contained as Appendix 5.

The design guide is long and detailed with many illustrated examples, but section 4 relates to design specifics, and in page 409 states:

Match the roof shape and slope of the existing house. In the case of houses with hipped roofs it can be particularly difficult to continue the ridge line and roof shape; however it is more visually pleasing to do so if this will not result in a terracing effect with the adjoining house.

The appellant notes that no.19 (the last house at the end of the cul-de-sac) has a design not dissimilar to that of what is proposed for no.15. I have included this design drawing as permitted in the appendix to this report. While this permitted design does allow for an extended roof, it has a partial angle replicating the normal angle for the houses along this street. I also note that as it is the final house on the street the impact would be significantly different than for a mid-terrace dwelling.

I further note that the detached dwellings on the western end of Woodville Walk appear to slightly post-date the overall estate and have slightly different roof designs. No.1 is very similar to the other houses,

while the house opposite clearly attempted to match the roof pattern, but the shape of the site and house design resulted in a slightly more confused shape. But overall, the street has a consistent and harmonious set of roof profiles.

I conclude that the development plan guidance for this development would be generally favourable to an alteration to increase the useable roofspace in principle, subject to the external roof design being in accordance with the overall visual harmony of the street and neighbourhood.

Overall Context and Design

Woodville Walk is an attractive, leafy suburban street, with few visible alterations to the houses or layout since it was originally built. All the original roof profiles are largely intact. There have been few significant alterations to the houses since construction.

The hipped roof design is obviously problematic for attic conversions as it provides less interior space than other types. The proposed alteration is described as a 'gambrel' roof, which is an architectural term which can describe many distinct types of hipped roof. But in general terms as used in this context it is an alteration in the roof with a shallow angle introduced to the rear to create interior space, with the hipped roof at the centreline extended out to the side gable. The proposal would allow for two bedrooms with storage space on the upper floor, providing a net increase in the house of one bedroom (one bedroom being lost as part of alterations to the first floor, which will lose some floorspace to a stairwell to the attic).

The appellant submits that the proposed design is superior in comparison to the frequent use elsewhere of oversized dormers to provide roofspace living areas, and while I would concur with this argument in general terms I would question whether this is really an optimal way to increase living space within a dwelling of this type.

The question of whether the impact is aesthetically acceptable is of course to a significant extent a subjective judgement. I would consider that the pattern of existing roof shapes gives a distinctive visual language to this suburban street and the loss of this pattern would have a significant and serious adverse overall impact on the visual amenities of Woodville Walk. I therefore concur with the conclusion of the planning authority that it would not be acceptable and would set an undesirable precedent for further such developments.

Residential amenity

While the proposed alterations significantly increase the overall bulk of the roof it does not appear likely to have any major impact on neighbouring properties by way of overlooking or overshadowing. The

proposed extra rooms seem quite cramped but would seem to provide reasonable internal amenity for a dwelling.

Appropriate Assessment and EIA

There are no Natura 2000 sites within 5 km of the appeal site. The closest designated sites are those in Dublin Bay - the site is within 1 km of the Liffey which discharges directly to the bay. There is no AA assessment on file but as the works would have no significant run-off or other relevant effect outside the boundaries of the site I do not consider there would be any possibility of an effect on the conservation status of an EU site so a stage 2 NIS would not be necessary.

The proposed development is significantly below the threshold set for urban development in the 2001 Regulations as amended. I do not consider that there is any specific environmental sensitivity which would justify a requirement for an EIA.

Other issues

There is no evidence on file that there is any flood hazard associated with the site. The proposed roof design would not significantly increase water run-off.

While an increase in floorspace may increase the demand for parking, I do not consider that this would be significant in the overall context.

The increase in floorspace would require a Section 48 development contribution under the published scheme. No other development contribution schemes apply.

There are no implications under Part V of the 2000 Act, as amended.

There are no archaeological sites or protected structures indicated on public records in the vicinity.

I do not consider that there are any other significant planning issues arising.

10. Conclusions and Recommendations

I conclude that the proposed development would appear bulky on the streetscape and would seriously injure the visual amenities of the area and would set an undesirable precedent for further such developments in the vicinity.

I recommend therefore that planning permission for the proposed attic extension be **refused** for the reasons and considerations set out below.

REASONS AND CONSIDERATIONS

It is considered that the proposed development would appear bulky on the streetscape and would result in a visual imbalance between the pair of semi-detached houses and would be at variance with the predominant pattern of hipped roof profiles in the this area, which exhibits a high degree of visual consistency. The proposed development would therefore seriously injure the visual amenities of the area and be contrary to the design guidance set out for extensions in Appendix 5 of the South Dublin County Council Development Plan 2010-2016; and would set an undesirable precedent for further such developments in the area. The proposed development would therefore be contrary to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

Philip Davis,
Inspectorate.
15th June 2016