



An
Bord
Pleanála

Inspector's Report

ABP-308026-20

Development

Alterations and extension to house comprising attic conversion and four dormer extensions - to front, rear and each side. Modifications to layout and fenestration.

Location

69 Roebuck Downs, Clonskeagh, D14

Planning Authority

Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council

Planning Authority Reg. Ref.

D20A/0163

Applicant(s)

Michael Frey + Miriam Alonso Alvarez

Type of Application

Permission

Planning Authority Decision

Refusal

Type of Appeal

First-Party

Appellant(s)

Michael Frey + Miriam Alonso Alvarez

Observer(s)

No

Date of Site Inspection

25th November 2020

Inspector

Suzanne Kehely

1.0 Site Location and Description

1.1. The appeal site relates to a detached two storey in a mature housing development of two storey semi-detached houses. The houses are predominantly finished with a mix of red brick and plaster. The subject dwelling is different in so far as it is wider and detached and entirely rendered. The roof is hipped on each side. It is sited at the end of row of house on the northern side of the road and is otherwise alongside a large open space fronted on two sides by housing. The site is larger than average and has an almost 30m deep back garden that backs onto to a separate housing development – Glenard Hall. No. 7 is a corner plot in this development and it adjoins the subject site to the rear and the house is at a slight angle with its rear elevation overlooking the green space.

2.0 Proposed Development

2.1.1. The proposed development comprises the following:

- It is proposed to convert the attic and to construct four zinc clad dormer extensions – one in each side/slope of the roof.
- The east and west side dormers are proposed to project at distances of about 1 from the side slopes at a point 977mm below the existing roof ridge.
- The front and back dormers are proposed to project at distances of almost 3m at a point 309mm below the ridge
- Front and rear dormers have an internal height of 2.4m and are fitted with 2 windows.
- Side dormers have a internal height of 2m and are fitted with 2 windows
- The proposed attic layout includes two large bedrooms and bathroom which would provide a total of 6 bedrooms in addition to a guest bedroom at ground floor.

Revised proposals

In drawings submitted with the grounds of appeal the dormer extension are modified: Front: A pair of roof lights replace the dormer to the front (Note the west elevation retains the dormer)

Rear: No change

Side: No change in form. The east dormer in bedroom 6 is fitted with opaque glazing. The ensuite bathroom is relocated to bedroom 5 which frees up light from the rear dormer.

3.0 Planning Authority Decision

3.1. Decision

3.1.1. The Planning Authority decided to refuse permission based on the following reasons and considerations.

- Visually incongruous

It is considered that the proposed development in particular the dormer extension to the east would lead to an unacceptable amount of overlooking and visual intrusion to the adjoining neighbour at no. 70. Furthermore the front dormer extension to the south by virtue of its size and position would appear visually out of keeping with the other properties and roofscapes in the area. It is considered that the proposed development would set an undesirable precedent for similar development in Roebuck Downs to the detriment of the visual and neighbour amenity of the area. It is considered that the proposed development therefore fails to comply with section 8.2.3.4 (i) of the development plan would be seriously injurious to the residential amenities of the area and contrary to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

3.2. Planning Authority Reports

3.2.1. Planning Report

- The report refers to section 8.2.3.4 of the Development plan.
- Larger dormers to front and rear will be longer in length than existing windows in façade.
- Dormers are not a feature in area and the proposal would set an unwarranted precedent.

- Overlooking from the smaller east facing side window into no.70 is of concern. Opaque glazing is not appropriate for a primary source of light to a habitable room.
- Overlook to the rear and west not at issue.

3.2.2. Other Technical Reports

- Drainage Division - no objection subject to conditions.

3.3. Prescribed Bodies

- No reports

4.0 Planning History

D02A/118 refers to permission for a semi-detached house on the site.

D15B/0009 refers to permission for a two storey extension to side, porch and alterations.

5.0 Policy & Context

5.1. Development Plan

5.1.1. The objective for the site is 'To protect and/or improve residential amenities.' (Zone A)

5.1.2. Chapter 8 sets out housing standards. Section 8.2.3.4 (i) refers to extensions.

(i) Extensions to Dwellings First floor rear extensions will be considered on their merits, noting that they can often have potential for negative impacts on the amenities of adjacent properties, and will only be permitted where the Planning Authority is satisfied that there will be no significant negative impacts on surrounding residential or visual amenities. In determining applications for first floor extensions the following factors will be considered:

- Overshadowing, overbearing and overlooking - along with proximity, height and length along mutual boundaries.
- Remaining rear private open space, its orientation and usability.
- Degree of set-back from mutual side boundaries.
- External finishes and design, which shall generally be in harmony with existing.

Ground floor rear extensions will be considered in terms of their length, height, proximity to mutual boundaries and quantum of usable rear private open space remaining.

Side extensions will be evaluated against proximity to boundaries, size and visual harmony with existing (especially front elevation), and impacts on residential amenity. First floor side extensions built over existing structures and matching existing dwelling design and height will generally be acceptable, though in certain cases a set-back of an extension's front facade and its roof profile and ridge may be sought to protect amenities, integrate into the streetscape and avoid a 'terracing' effect. External finishes shall normally be in harmony with existing.

Any planning application submitted in relation to extensions shall clearly indicate on all drawings the extent of demolition/wall removal required to facilitate the proposed development and a structural report may be required to determine the integrity of walls/structures to be retained and outline potential impacts on adjoining properties. This requirement should be ascertained at pre-planning stage. A structural report must be submitted in all instances where a basement or new first/upper floor level is proposed within the envelope of an existing dwelling.

Side gable, protruding parapet walls at eaves/gutter level of hip-roofs are not encouraged.

The proposed construction of new building structures directly onto the boundary with the public realm (including footpaths/open space/roads etc) is not acceptable and it will be required that they are set within the existing boundary on site. The provision of windows (particularly at first floor level) within the side elevation of extensions adjacent to public open space will be encouraged in order to promote passive surveillance.

Roof alterations/expansions to main roof profiles -

changing the hip-end roof of a semi-detached house to a gable/ 'A' frame end or 'half-hip' for example – will be assessed against a number of criteria including:

- Careful consideration and special regard to the character and size of the structure, its position on the streetscape and proximity to adjacent structures.
- Existing roof variations on the streetscape.
- Distance/contrast/visibility of proposed roof end.
- Harmony with the rest of the structure, adjacent structures and prominence.

Dormer extensions to roofs will be considered with regard to impacts on existing character and form, and the privacy of adjacent properties. The design, dimensions and bulk of any roof proposal relative to the overall size of the dwelling and gardens will be the overriding considerations. Dormer extensions shall be set back from the eaves, gables and/or party boundaries.

The proposed quality of materials/finishes for dormers will be considered carefully as this can greatly improve their appearance. The level and type of glazing within a dormer structure should have regard to existing window treatments and fenestration

of the dwelling. Particular care will be taken in evaluating large, visually dominant dormer window structures, with a balance sought between quality residential amenity and the privacy of adjacent properties. Excessive overlooking of adjacent properties should be avoided unless support by the neighbours affected can be demonstrated.

More innovative design responses will be encouraged, particularly within sites where there may be difficulty adhering to the above guidance and where objectives of habitability and energy conservation are at stake.

RES4 states that it is Council policy to improve and conserve housing stock of the County, to densify existing built-up areas, having due regard to the amenities of existing established residential communities and to retain and improve residential amenities in established residential communities.

5.2. Environmental Impact Assessment - Preliminary Examination

- 5.2.1. Having regard to the limited nature and scale of the proposed development and the absence of any connectivity to any sensitive location, there is no real likelihood of significant effects on the environment arising from the proposed development. The need for environmental impact assessment can, therefore, be excluded at preliminary examination and a screening determination is not required.

6.0 The Appeal

6.1. Grounds of Appeal

- 6.1.1. A first -party appeal has been lodged by the neighbouring residents and the grounds of objection raise the following issues:
- development is acceptable in principle
 - The issue of overlooking can be addressed by condition.
 - Revised plans have been submitted which retain a workable floor area for the provision of 2 bedrooms and provide a clear glazed window for bedroom 6 in the rear dormer. The layout is accordingly revised.
 - While it is accepted that the front dormer would introduce a new precedence the acceptability of this is disputed. There are numerous examples throughout the county. Eg 34 Roebuck Downs is 3 storey.
 - The omission of the front dormer is a compromise.

6.2. Planning Authority Response

- The revised drawings are considered an improvement. There remains concern about overlooking to the east due to its size at 1.7m in width and that it is openable. A smaller window would be preferable.

7.0 **Assessment**

7.1. **Issues**

7.1.1. In this case the applicant is seeking to construct a domestic extension for two additional bedrooms at attic level as a means of expanding a family home for growing family needs. In the first instance the house is located in a residential area where it is an objective to protect and improve residential amenity. The use is therefore acceptable at the location. The approach to extending a house vertically also accords with sustainable housing policies. The issues in this case relate to design detail and centre on visual amenity and overlooking.

7.2. **Visual Amenity.**

- 7.2.1. Having regard to the particular provisions for dormer extensions in section 8.2 of the development plan, I consider that the planning authority was reasonable to conclude that the proposed dormer extension would be visually incongruous. The scale and massing on four sides would constitute a significant departure from the roof form in a manner that fails to comply adequately with the principle of subordination. The dormer windows by reason of scale and massing would serve to dominate the profile. I do not accept the 'book end' argument as there is no strong architectural style being presented. The roof would simply be top heavy and not in a way that meaningfully redefines the architectural style of the building as an entire entity.
- 7.2.2. The front and rear are the most intrusive in terms of scale and the incongruity is most apparent from the prominent and panoramic views of the side profile of the house as viewed in near and distant points across the adjacent public open space. Accordingly I consider the omission of the front dormer, as indicated in the revised drawings submitted on appeal and supported by the planning authority, to be a welcome improvement as it allows for better assimilation into the streetscape.

- 7.2.3. I consider the garden depth and scale allows for the dormer to the rear .
- 7.2.4. With respect to the side dormer I do not consider this so visually intrusive due to the level of projection and limited views. A marginal narrowing would enhance its subordination and allow the dormer to be framed by the slope. I am the opinion that the west facing dormer will add to the passive surveillance of the green on its eastern side. In this regard I note some hedges obscure some eastern views from the houses on the western side. The west facing dormer therefore has merit in a wider context.

7.3. **Overlooking**

- 7.3.1. There is concern about overlooking from the eastern dormer in Bedroom 6 particularly in view of its window width at 1.7m and the potential for overlooking into no.70 from an open window at this location – opaque glazing in this case would still in the opinion of the planning authority be inadequate. I note that the revised layout introduces a new source of light (the rear dormer) into bedroom 6 and the roof lights to the front are also a source of light and ventilation. Accordingly, there is scope to modify the side dormer without comprising ventilation. The restriction to a fixed window is not unreasonable in this context. This would allow for the retention of a symmetrical profile.
- 7.3.2. In light of the above assessment, I do not consider that the proposed development as revised and subject to a minor alteration would result in any significant impact on residential or visual amenity and consider that in overall terms the proposed development would be consistent with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

8.0 **Appropriate Assessment**

- 8.1.1. Having regard to the minor nature of the proposed development and the location of the site in a serviced urban area and the separation distance to the nearest European site, no Appropriate Assessment issues arise. Accordingly, the proposed

development, individually or in combination with other plans or projects would not be likely to have a significant effect on any designated European Site and a Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment and submission of a NIS is not therefore required.

9.0 Recommendation

9.1. I recommend that planning permission for the proposed development be granted based on the following reasons and considerations, as set out below.

10.0 Reasons and Considerations

Having regard to the provisions of the Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown Development Plan 2016-2022, the existing pattern of development in the area, and the nature of the proposed development, it is considered that, subject to compliance with the conditions set out below, the proposed development would not detract from the visual amenities of the area and would not give rise to any significant overlooking and would therefore not seriously injure the amenities of the area or of property in the vicinity. The proposed development would, therefore, be in accordance with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

11.0 Conditions

1. The development shall be carried out and completed in accordance with the plans and particulars lodged with the application, as amended by the further plans and particulars submitted to An Bord Pleanála on the 25th day of August 2020 except as may otherwise be required in order to comply with the following conditions. Where such conditions require details to be agreed with the planning authority, the developer shall agree such details in writing with the planning authority prior to commencement of development and the development shall be carried out and completed in accordance with the agreed particulars.

Reason: In the interest of clarity.

2. (a) The East facing dormer shall be fitted with fixed opaque glazing.
- (b) The east and west facing dormer windows shall be narrow by 700mm.
- (c) The front elevation shall be fitted with roof lights at indicated in the submitted drawings.

Revised drawings shall be submitted ...

Reason: In the interest of clarity

- (d) Water supply and drainage arrangements, including the disposal of surface water, shall comply with the requirements of the planning authority for such works and services.

Reason: In the interest of public health.

- (e) The external finishes of the proposed extension (including roof tiles/slates) shall be the same as those of the existing dwelling in respect of colour and texture.

Reason: In the interest of visual amenity.

Suzanne Kehely

Senior Planning Inspector

30th November 2020