



An
Bord
Pleanála

Inspector's Report

ABP-318404-23

Development	Conversion of attic space
Location	Green Ivies, Thormanby Rd., Howth, Dublin
Planning Authority	Fingal County Council
Planning Authority Reg. Ref.	F23A/0526
Applicant(s)	Conor and Caroline O'Beirne
Type of Application	Permission
Planning Authority Decision	To refuse permission
Type of Appeal	First Party v. Decision
Appellant(s)	Caroline and Conor O'Beirne
Observer(s)	none
Date of Site Inspection	11 th January 2024
Inspector	Brendan McGrath

1.0 Site Location and Description

- 1.1. The site is part of an extensive low density residential area that extends from Howth village, southward and upward to the Summit, on the Howth peninsula. Much of the housing is on sloping ground, sloping down from two high points, East Mountain on the coast and the Hill of Howth inland. The proposal site fronts onto Thormanby Road and faces the housing area overlooked by the Hill of Howth. The existing house is 2-storey, of conventional design with gardens to the front and rear. There is a variety of house types and external building finishes in the immediate vicinity.

2.0 Proposed Development

- 2.1. The stated purpose is the conversion of an attic to storage and extension of the attic in the form of dormer extensions to the front and side.

3.0 Planning Authority Decision

3.1. Decision

Refuse permission for two reasons

1. The proposed dormers by reason of inappropriate ad hoc design, scale and height are not subordinate to the roof slope and would result in visually dominant features which would be visually obtrusive
2. The proposed development would not integrate into the established character of the area and would be contrary to design guidance set out in section 14.10.2.5 'Attic conversions and dormer extensions' and Objective SPQHO45 (encouraging sensitively designed extensions) of the Fingal Development Plan 2023-2029.

3.2. Planning Authority Reports

3.2.1. Planning Reports

The planning report is the basis of planning authority decision

- The report references objectives and guidance in the county development plan

- It considers the main issues for consideration are zoning, impact on residential amenity, water services, EIAR and Appropriate Assessment.
- It considers that the proposal is in accordance with the zoning objective for the area, that there is no objection in relation to water services, would not require an EIAR by virtue of the small scale of what is proposed and that, in respect of appropriate assessment (AA) there is no realistic pathway between the subject site and nearby Natura 2000 sites.
- However, it is concluded that the proposed design is not in accordance with the design policy and guidance of the Fingal Development Plan .

3.2.2. Other Technical Reports

Water Services has no objection subject to appropriate conditions

3.3. Prescribed Bodies

None

3.4. Third Party Observations

None

4.0 Planning History

None relevant

5.0 Policy Context

5.1. Development Plan

The development plan is the Fingal Development Plan 2023-2029

The site is zoned RS-residential and is in the buffer zone of the Howth Special Amenity Area Order (SAAO)

Policy DMSO33- Home based economic activity

Permit home-based economic activities where the proposed activity is sub-ordinate to the main residential use of the dwelling and does not adversely impact the existing residential amenities of area by way of noise or disturbance

Policy SPQHP41-Residential Extensions

Support the extension of existing dwellings with extensions of appropriate scale and subject to the protection of residential and visual amenities

Policy SPQHO45- Domestic extensions

Encourage sensitively designed extensions to existing dwellings which do not negatively impact on the environment of on adjoining properties or area

14.10.2.5 Roof Alterations including Attic Conversions and Dormer Extensions

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

- > Consideration and 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 evaluated against the impact of the structure on the form, and character of the existing dwelling house and the privacy of adjacent properties. The design, dimensions, and bulk of the dormer relative to the overall extent of roof as well as the size of the dwelling and rear garden will be the overriding considerations, together with the visual impact of the structure when viewed from adjoining streets and public areas.

Dormer extensions shall be set back from the eaves, gables and/or party boundaries and shall be set down from the existing ridge level so as not to dominate the roof space.

The quality of materials/finishes to dormer extensions shall be given careful consideration and should match those of the existing roof.

The level and type of glazing within a dormer extension should have regard to existing window treatments and fenestration of the dwelling. Regard should also be had to extent of fenestration proposed at attic level relative to adjoining residential units and to ensure the preservation of amenities.

Excessive overlooking of adjacent properties should be avoided.

5.2. Natural Heritage Designations

None relevant

5.3. EIA Screening

The proposal is not a class requiring screening

6.0 The Appeal

6.1. Grounds of Appeal

The main points of the appeal letter are as follows:-

- The applicants/appellants would accept significant amendments to the proposal to address the design issues raised by the local planning authority, i.e. would accept a smaller glazed balcony in front elevation, would accept lower dormers if internal head height is reasonable
- The proposal is designed to minimise adverse impact on neighbours and views from the street.
- The proposal includes is for 2 office spaces in the side dormer as well as for the storage space which is stated as the proposed use in the application.
- The proposed front dormer window is to be able to enjoy an attractive view
- A set of drawings accompany the appeal letter, showing the same design as originally submitted for planning permission.

6.2. Planning Authority Response

The planning authority has responded, restating its second reason for refusing permission.

6.3. Observations

None received

7.0 Assessment

There are four main issues to be considered:-

- Residential amenity in the vicinity
- The proposed use of the attic storey
- Building design
- Appropriate Assessment(AA)

- 7.1. The house is set back from the road and well screened. There is no dominant building aesthetic to be taken into account and I therefore agree with the applicants/appellants that, given the nature of the development proposed, the likely impact on the residential amenity of neighbours or the character of Thormanby Road are not significant issues.
- 7.2. The intended use as stated in the planning application is storage but it is clearly the case from the appeal letter that the creation of home office space and taking advantage of an attractive vista across to the Hill of Howth are major considerations. There is a development plan policy supporting office use (Policy DMSO33- Home based economic activity) and I can see no reason why such use, well designed, at attic-storey level would not be supported by the local planning authority but it should be stated as part of the description of the development proposed.
- 7.3. The applicants/appellants indicate a willingness to modify their design but have not submitted a revised design for consideration by the Board. The reservations of the local planning authority are well founded and a design template is offered in the relevant section of the development plan (14.10.2.5 Roof Alterations including Attic Conversions and Dormer Extensions).
- 7.4. No appropriate assessment (AA) issue arises. Having regard to the small scale of the proposal- a loft conversion of a house on a site not connected to any European site, it is not considered that the proposed development would be likely to have a significant effect individually or in combination with other plans or projects on a European site.

8.0 Recommendation

I recommend that planning permission be refused for the reasons and considerations set out below.

9.0 Reasons and Considerations

Having regard to its scale and bulk of the bulk of the proposal, contradictions about the intended use of the attic storey and lack of compliance with the relevant design guidance in the Fingal County Development Plan 2023-2029, it is considered that the proposed development would be seriously injurious to residential amenity and therefore contrary to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

I confirm that this report represents my professional planning assessment, judgement and opinion on the matter assigned to me and that no person has influenced or sought to influence, directly or indirectly, the exercise of my professional judgement in an improper or inappropriate way.

Brendan McGrath
Planning Inspector

8th February 2024

Appendix 1 - Form 1

EIA Pre-Screening

[EIAR not submitted]

An Bord Pleanála Case Reference	ABP-318404-23			
Proposed Development Summary	Conversion of attic space			
Development Address	Green Ivies, Thormanby Rd., Howth, Dublin			
1. Does the proposed development come within the definition of a 'project' for the purposes of EIA? (that is involving construction works, demolition, or interventions in the natural surroundings)		Yes		
		No	No further action required	
2. Is the proposed development of a class specified in Part 1 or Part 2, Schedule 5, Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended) and does it equal or exceed any relevant quantity, area or limit where specified for that class?				
Yes		Class.....	EIA Mandatory EIAR required	
No	X		Proceed to Q.3	
3. Is the proposed development of a class specified in Part 2, Schedule 5, Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended) but does not equal or exceed a relevant quantity, area or other limit specified [sub-threshold development]?				
		Threshold	Comment (if relevant)	Conclusion
No	X	N/A		No EIAR or Preliminary Examination required
Yes		Class/Threshold.....		Proceed to Q.4

4. Has Schedule 7A information been submitted?

No	X	Preliminary Examination required
Yes		Screening Determination required

Inspector: _____

Date: _____