



An
Bord
Pleanála

Inspector's Report

ABP-318913-24

Development	Dormer window extension at first floor level to the front of existing semi-detached dwelling and all associated ancillary works.
Location	8 Sycamore Road, Mount Merrion, Blackrock, Co. Dublin, A94 A6P7.
Planning Authority	Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council.
Planning Authority Reg. Ref.	D23B/0510.
Applicant(s)	Emily Lyons & Stephen Kenny.
Type of Application	Planning Permission.
Planning Authority Decision	Grant.
Type of Appeal	Third Party.
Appellant(s)	Vera Markevich.
Observer(s)	None.
Date of Site Inspection	2 nd day March, 2024.
Inspector	Patricia-Marie Young.

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1.0 Site Location and Description

- 1.1. No. 8 Sycamore Road, Mount Merrion, Blackrock, the appeal site has a stated site area of 0.0597ha. It contains an attractive two storey hipped roof profile and rounded bay windowed semi-detached dwelling with dating to c1930s that is setback from the public roadway by an area that accommodates off-street car parking. It contains a later contemporary in design single storey flat roofed rear extension with a large rear garden area.
- 1.2. Sycamore Road is a relatively low-density suburban street characterised by its wide width and sloping alignment that is bound by mainly pairs of semi-detached dwellings on either side.
- 1.3. The site itself is situated c0.1km to the south of Sycamore Roads junction with Greenfield Road and similar distance as the bird would fly from Greenfield Roads junction with the Stillorgan Road (R138) in the suburb of Blackrock.

2.0 Proposed Development

- 2.1. Planning permission is sought for a dormer window extension at first floor level to the front of existing semi-detached dwelling and all associated ancillary works. According to the planning application form the existing gross floor area of the subject property is 156.1m² and that the additional floor area that would arise from this application is 1.7m².

3.0 Planning Authority Decision

3.1. Decision

- 3.1.1. Permission was **GRANTED**, subject to four mainly standard conditions. (Date:18.12.2023).

3.2. Planning Authority Reports

3.2.1. Planning Reports

The main points of the planner's report include:

- Proposal accords with relevant policy provisions of the Development Plan.
- The dormer design and scale are acceptable.
- The zinc finish of the dormer would not be out of character with the dwelling or the streetscape.
- No AA or EIA issues arise.
- Recommends grant of permission.

3.2.2. **Other Technical Reports**

None.

3.3. **Prescribed Bodies**

3.3.1. None.

3.4. **Third Party Observations**

3.4.1. 2 No. Third Party observations received during the course of the Planning Authority's determination of this application. This included a submission from the appellant raising the same substantive issues as those raised in their appeal submission to the Board and the other supports this proposal considering it a positive enhancement to the road.

4.0 **Planning History**

4.1. **Site and Setting**

4.1.1. No recent and or relevant planning history within the site context.

5.0 **Policy Context**

5.1. **Development Plan**

5.1.1. The Dun Laoghaire County Development Plan, 2022-2028, is the operative County Development Plan, under which this appeal site is zoned Objective A which seeks '*to provide residential development and improve residential amenity while protecting the*

existing residential amenities'. Residential development is listed within the '*Permitted in Principle*' category of this zoning objective.

- 5.1.2. Policy Objective PHP19: Existing Housing Stock – Adaptation of the Development Plan, sets out that it is a Development Plan policy objective to conserve and improve existing housing stock through supporting improvements and adaption of homes consistent with NPO 34 of the NPF.
- 5.1.3. Section 12.3.7 of the Development Plan relates to additional accommodation in existing built-up areas with Section 12.3.7.1 relating to extensions.
- 5.1.4. Section 12.3.7.1(i) of the Development Plan deals specifically with extensions to the front of existing dwellings. It states: "*front extensions, at both ground and first level will be considered acceptable in principle subject to scale, design, and impact on visual and residential amenities*" and that: "excessive scale should be avoided. Front extensions, particularly at first floor level, should reflect the roof shape and slope of the main dwelling.
- 5.1.5. Section 12.3.7.1(iv) of the Development Plan deals with alterations at roof/attic level and it sets out the following criteria for their assessment:
- 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.

In relation to dormer extensions to roofs, i.e., to the front, side, and rear, it states that they: "*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. Dormer extensions should be set down from the existing ridge level so as to not read as a third storey extension at roof level to the rear*".

It also states: "*the proposed quality of materials/finishes for dormer extensions will be considered carefully as this can greatly improve their appearance. The level and type*

of glazing within a dormer extension should have regard to existing window treatments and fenestration of the dwelling. However, regard should also be had to size of fenestration proposed at attic level relative to adjoining residential amenities. 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”.

- 5.1.6. Section 11.4.3.2 and Policy Objective HER20 of the Development Plan deal with the matter of buildings of vernacular and heritage interest.
- 5.1.7. Section 11.4.3.3 and Policy Objective HER21 of the Development Plan deals with 19th and 20th Century buildings, estates, and features. It sets out that it is a Policy Objective to:
- i. Encourage the appropriate development of exemplar nineteenth and twentieth century buildings, and estates to ensure their character is not compromised.
 - ii. Encourage the retention and reinstatement of features that contribute to the character of exemplar nineteenth and twentieth century buildings, and estates such as roofscapes, boundary treatments and other features considered worthy of retention.
 - iii. Ensure the design of developments on lands located immediately adjacent to such groupings of buildings addresses the visual impact on any established setting.

5.2. Natural Heritage Designations

- 5.2.1. The appeal site is not located in or immediately adjacent to a designated European Site, a Natural Heritage Area (NHA) or a proposed NHA. However, I note that the site is within c1.km to the south west of the South Dublin Bay and River Tolka Estuary SPA as the bird would fly (Site Code: 004024) and the South Dublin Bay SAC (Site: Code 00210).

5.3. EIA Screening

5.3.1. Having regard to the modest nature and scale of the development proposed, the site location within an established built-up urban area which is served by public infrastructure and outside of any protected site or heritage designation, the nature of the receiving environment and the existing pattern of residential development in the vicinity, and the separation distance from the nearest 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.

5.4. Built Heritage

5.4.1. None within the vicinity.

6.0 The Appeal

6.1. Grounds of Appeal

6.1.1. The main points of the Third-Party grounds of appeal are:

- The proposed amendments contrast sharply with adjacent and nearby houses.
- This neighbourhood was developed by John Kenny in the 1930s and is characterised by semi-detached houses with mirror elevations which create a harmonious visual symmetry.
- The use of zinc is inappropriate and is typically an industrial finish.
- The Development Plan seeks to preserve the unique character of historical estates.
- This proposal would set an undesirable precedent.
- Reference is made to other similar applications in the area that were refused.

6.2. Applicant Response

6.2.1. The main points of the applicant's response are:

- It is sought that the Planning Authority's decision is upheld as there is no substantive basis for it to be overturned.

- This proposal has had full cognisance of the relevant planning provisions and its setting.
- The house currently has a side window to its front facing into No. 6 Sycamore Road which this application would block.
- No. 6 Sycamore Road contains a sizeable dormer window facing into the side of the subject property. This significantly varies from the architectural treatment of the street.
- There is planning precedent in the area for the provision of front dormer windows to similar semi-detached properties of this style.
- There is no conservation status on this street or site.
- Zinc is a typical accepted material finish for modern dormer windows.
- Policy HER21 of the Development Plan encourages appropriate developments that do not compromise the character of 19th and 20th Century building.
- The scale of the development is one that ensures that it will visually integrate with the character and aesthetic of Mount Merrion.
- This proposal accords with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

6.3. Planning Authority Response

- 6.3.1. The Planning Authority's response requests the Board to have regard to their Planning Officer's report and considers that this appeal raises no issues that would change their decision.

7.0 Assessment

7.1. Preliminary Comment

- 7.1.1. I consider that the key issues in this appeal case are:

- Principle of the Proposed Development

- 7.1.2. The matter of '*Appropriate Assessment*' also requires examination. I am satisfied that no other substantive planning issues arise in this appeal case.

7.2. Principle of the Proposed Development

- 7.2.1. I firstly note that the subject site is located in an area zoned 'A' which has the objective of protecting and/or improving residential amenity under the Dún Laoghaire Rathdown County Development Plan, 2022-2028. The principle of the proposed development, a development which consists of the addition of a former window to the first-floor level of No. 8 Sycamore, a semi-detached dwelling dating to c1930s but not afforded any specific protection nor does it form part of a streetscape scene provided any architectural or other protection, is a type of development that is deemed to be generally acceptable, subject to other planning considerations being satisfied.
- 7.2.2. I therefore consider that the primary issues, in this appeal case is the Third Party's visual amenity concerns arising from the introduction of a dormer window to this semi-detached dwelling which forms part of a group which dates back to a 1930s development of groups of similar in-built form, design and aesthetics that characterise this suburban residential area of Mount Merrion, including Sycamore Road. With Sycamore Road containing a number of once matching pairs to No. 8 and 10 Sycamore Road but also containing variation to the design and built form of its 1930s semi-detached pairs. As well as since their completion these pairs have been subject to varying alterations and additions. With this including additions and alterations that are visible from the public domain.
- 7.2.3. It is the contention of the appellant in this case that the proposed development is such that it would not only diminish the semi-detached dwelling of No. 8 Sycamore Road, the semi-detached pair it forms part of, and it would also diminish the character of Sycamore Roads streetscape scene. Should it be permitted, it would also in their view give rise to an undesirable precedent with other such developments in time eroding the character of this area in a manner that is contrary to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.
- 7.2.4. The current Development Plan is generally favourable to such extensions, subject to normal planning criteria and in terms of alterations to the front of an existing dwelling and dormer insertions I note Section 12.3.7.1(i) and (iv) in this regard.
- 7.2.5. In relation to Section 12.3.7.1(i) of the Development Plan which I note deals specifically with extensions to the front of existing dwellings it seeks that such developments will be considered acceptable in principle where their scale and design

are deemed to be acceptable and where they do not give rise to any adverse visual and/or residential amenities.

- 7.2.6. It also seeks that interventions to the front of existing dwellings should not be excessive in their scale.
- 7.2.7. In terms of visual amenity, I do not have issue with the design, extent, or scale, of the proposed dormer extension and I consider that it would integrate satisfactorily with the existing dwelling and other properties in the vicinity. I do not consider it to be visually incongruous or excessively overbearing in its context.
- 7.2.8. This is reflected in its modest 2.063m height, its width of 2.2m and its maximum projection from the pitched roof of 2.58m. Its placement is balanced in terms of it is positioned at a c540mm setback from the front point/eaves of the roof.
- 7.2.9. The placement of the glazing and the glazing fenestration proposed for the dormer window insertion harmonises with the ground floor level window immediately below it and other windows of this semi-detached pair with their similar vertical divisions.
- 7.2.10. Additionally, the zinc finish I consider is an appropriate of its time external finish that would improve its patination as it ages requiring little future maintenance. It is also clearly legible as a new building layer in the context of this 1930s dwelling as appreciated from the public domain.
- 7.2.11. Further, the positioning of the proposed dormer would effectively block any overlooking from an existing velux roof light that faces towards the appellants property and the dormer window itself would address the wide street of Sycamore Road where it would result in no undue overlooking of any residential property in its vicinity.
- 7.2.12. Moreover, it would form part of a streetscape scene where these 1930s properties whilst still retaining a high degree of their original 1930s-character, charm, and authenticity. Notwithstanding, they have been subject to interventions with this including additions to these properties that are legible from the public domain and that do change their original built form as well as appearance. This includes the large dormer window to the side of the appellants property (No. 6 Sycamore Road) which addresses the side of No. 8 Sycamore Road.
- 7.2.13. As such I consider that the proposed dormer accords with the requirements of Section 12.3.7.1(i) of the Development Plan.

- 7.2.14. In relation to Section 12.3.7.1(iv) this requires dormer windows to demonstrate that they accord with four criteria.
- 7.2.15. The first requires careful consideration and special regard to the character and size of the structure, its position on the streetscape and proximity to adjacent structure.
- 7.2.16. For the reasons set out above I consider that the dormer window achieves this by its modest overall built form when one considers that the existing dwelling has a ridge length over No. 8 Sycamore Road of c9.75m and its dimensions is such that as a projection it is substantially more modest in its scale to the round bay window which extends from the ground level to the first floor level and has a width of c3.4m. This rounded bay window feature is replicated in its semi-detached pair of No. 10 Sycamore Road with a modest separation of half a meter between them. Additionally, the dormer window is setback from the main asymmetrically placed two storey section of the main front façade and as said its placement as well as its glazing fenestration details is harmonious with the ground floor level window of the single storey section of the main elevation below it. I therefore consider that this proposal accords with this first criterion.
- 7.2.17. The second criteria relates to the existing roof variations in the streetscape scene.
- 7.2.18. As said, there are difference to the semi-detached pairs that characterise either side of Sycamore Road and other 1930s semi-detached pairs visible from Sycamore Road on Greenfield Road in the visual setting of the site.
- 7.2.19. There are also later additions visible to the 1930s roof structures of these semi-detached pairs that are highly visible from the public domain.
- 7.2.20. As such this 1930s streetscape scene does not survive intact or is it legible as a surviving highly authentic example of each of the different semi-detached pairs that originally characterised either side of Sycamore Road. In this context I consider the insertion of a modest proposed dormer window is not out of context with the change that has occurred within its visual setting and the variation that exists in the roof structures as visible from the public domain. With this as said including later dormer insertions that are visible additions projecting and disrupting the legibility of these 1930s semi-detached pairs as viewed from the public domain.
- 7.2.21. I therefore consider that this proposal accords with this second criteria.

- 7.2.22. The third criteria relates to the distance, contrast, and visibility of proposed roof end.
- 7.2.23. For the reasons already discussed I consider that the proposed dormer whilst it would be legible and visible as a new addition its modest scale, extent in nature allows it to be subservient to the main roof structure of No. 8 Sycamore Road.
- 7.2.24. I therefore consider that this proposal accords with this third criteria.
- 7.2.25. The fourth criteria relates to harmony with the rest of the structure, adjacent structures, and prominence. For the reasons already discussed I consider that this contemporary of its time, modest in scale, nature, and extent dormer window, would sit comfortably as a subservient new building element to this 1930s semi-detached dwelling and its matching pair, i.e., No. 10 Sycamore Road.
- 7.2.26. As discussed above, it is also not a design feature that would be inconsistent with the alterations and additions that have occurred to other semi-detached 1930s in its streetscape scene or the surviving suburban 1930s urbanscape setting it forms part of.
- 7.2.27. I therefore consider that this proposal accords with this fourth criteria.
- 7.2.28. I am not of the view that the proposed development would conflict with Section 11.4.3.2, 11.4.3.3, Policy Objective HER20 or Policy HER21 of the Development Plan as I am of the view that this proposal does not detract from the built heritage interest of this building, its semi-detached pair or its 1930s streetscape scene. I again reiterate this building and its streetscape scene are not afforded any specific protection and Policy Objective PHP19 of the Development Plan is supportive of improve existing housing stock, subject to safeguards.
- 7.2.29. My final comment relates to undesirable precedent.
- 7.2.30. Alterations and additions like that proposed under this application are not exempt and therefore any similar developments would be subject to the making of a planning application where their individual merits would be considered against prevailing planning policy provisions and guidance at that time. I am therefore not convinced that the proposed development would give rise to any undesirable precedent that would in turn result in the cumulative erosion of this 1930s designed and laid out residential suburban area, which whilst is attractive in its own right is not afforded any specific protection.

7.2.31. Conclusion: Having regard to the above, I am satisfied that the proposed development is in accordance with the provisions of the operative County Development Plan, is in keeping with the pattern of development in the area, it would not detract from the visual amenities or character of its streetscape scene, and it is in accordance with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

8.0 Appropriate Assessment

8.1.1. Having regard to the modest, nature and scale of the proposed development, the location of the site within an adequately serviced urban area, the physical separation distances to designated European Sites, and the absence of an ecological and/ or a hydrological connection, the potential of likely significant effects on European Sites arising from the proposed development, alone or in combination effects, can be reasonably excluded.

9.0 Recommendation

9.1. Having regard to the above, I recommend that permission be **GRANTED** for the development, subject to conditions, for the reasons and considerations set out below:

10.0 Reasons and Considerations

10.1. Having regard to the provisions of the Dún Laoghaire Rathdown County Development Plan, 2022-2028, to the pattern of development in the area and to the nature, form, scale, and design of the proposed development, it is considered that, subject to compliance with the conditions set out below, the proposed development would not seriously injure the residential or visual amenities of the area. The proposed development would be in accordance with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

11.0 Conditions

1. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the plans and particulars lodged with the application, 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. Site development and building works shall be carried out only between the hours of 0800 to 1900 Mondays to Fridays inclusive, between 0900 to 1400 hours on Saturdays and not at all on Sundays and public holidays. Deviation from these times will only be allowed in exceptional circumstances where prior written approval has been received from the planning authority.

Reason: In order to safeguard the amenities of property in the vicinity.

3. The entire dwelling shall be used as a single dwelling unit and shall not be subdivided in any manner or used as two or more separate habitable units.

Reason: To prevent unauthorised development.

4. The external finishes of the dormer shall harmonise with those of the existing dwelling in respect of colour and texture.

Reason: In the interest of visual amenity.

5. That all necessary measures be taken by the contractor to prevent the spillage or deposit of clay, rubble, or other debris on adjoining roads during the course of the works.

Reason: To protect the amenities 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.

Patricia-Marie Young
Planning Inspector - 3rd day of March 2024.

Appendix 1 - Form 1

EIA Pre-Screening

[EIAR not submitted]

An Bord Pleanála Case Reference	ABP-318913-24		
Proposed Development Summary	Dormer window extension at first floor level to the front of existing semi-detached dwelling and all associated ancillary works.		
Development Address	8 Sycamore Road, Mount Merrion, Blackrock, Co. Dublin, A94 A6P7.		
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			EIA Mandatory EIAR required
No	✓		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	✓		No EIAR or Preliminary Examination required
Yes			Proceed to Q.4

4. Has Schedule 7A information been submitted?

No		Preliminary Examination required
Yes		Screening Determination required

Inspector: _____

Date: _____