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## Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 20 September 2017

**by Penelope Metcalfe BA(Hons) MSc DipUP DipDBE MRTPI IHBC**

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

**Decision date: 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2017**

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**Appeal Ref: APP/Q1445/D/17/3178559**

**31 Harrington Road, Brighton, BN1 6RF**

- 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 Mike Thomson against the decision of Brighton and Hove City Council.
  - The application Ref BH2017/01021, dated 24 March 2017, was refused by notice dated 19 May 2017.
  - The development proposed is hip to gable loft conversion with rear dormer, removal of 2 chimneys and creation of 1 new chimney to match.
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### Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

### Main issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the conservation area.

### Reasons

3. The appeal property is a late 19<sup>th</sup> century two storey detached house. It is constructed of red brick on the front elevation with a forward projecting gable element incorporating a white painted ground floor bay window and tile hanging at first floor level. The side and rear elevations are of a darker brick with red brick quoins and window surrounds. There is a rear projecting gable element. There is a decorative plaque to the side of the front door and a patterned, tiled front garden path.
4. The roof form is something of an anomaly in comparison with the majority of the other houses in the street, in that, although the steepness of the pitch is not unusual, it has a very short ridge parallel to the road and is covered in a type of pantile, the colour and form of which are untypical of the character and appearance of the surrounding houses. This roof form and its materials give what is otherwise a reasonably well-proportioned house a somewhat pinched character which detracts from its appearance.
5. The site lies within the Preston Park Conservation Area. In assessing the proposal I have a duty to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the conservation area and as heritage assets are irreplaceable, any loss or harm to them requires clear and convincing justification.

6. The conservation area in the immediate surroundings of the site is characterised by substantial two storey detached and semi-detached houses. There is a much less cohesive streetscape here than in those parts of the conservation area characterised by more formal terraces, with a very wide variety of styles, detailing and roof form along Harrington Road, although common themes are red brick, tile hanging and slate or clay tiled roofs. The majority have substantial roofs with long ridges, several with half-hips and strong front gable elements.
7. The policies relevant in this case include Policies QD14 and HE6 of the Brighton and Hove City Plan Part One 2016 (the City Plan). QD14 allows for extensions to buildings provided they are, among other things, well designed and sited in relation to the existing building and the surrounding area. HE6 requires development in conservation areas to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the area and, among other things, to be of a high standard of design and detailing, and to use materials sympathetic to the area.
8. Also relevant are Supplementary Planning Documents 12 and 09 (the SPDs) which offer design guidance for extensions, including roof conversions, and the use of architectural features. These advise that the original form, shape and height of a roof should not be altered where this would harm group value, that new rooflights should be as few and as small as possible, and that chimney stacks should be retained.
9. The proposal consists of a number of elements, each of which I have considered in the context of their impact on the character and appearance of the existing house itself and the wider conservation area. The element which would have the greatest impact in this context is the conversion of the hipped roof to a gable at each side elevation. This would result in a radical change to the character of the building. However, in my opinion, it would not necessarily be harmful.
10. The existing projecting front and rear gable elements would be retained and remain prominent and the enlarged roof would not be dissimilar to several others in the street, including the immediate neighbouring properties at Nos. 27 and 29. The latter are mentioned in the Conservation Area Character Statement with reference, among other things, to their original slate roofs. There is no clear uniformity of roof forms along the street to be disrupted by the proposal and I consider that the appearance of the building as a whole would be improved by the construction of a roof of proportions better suited to those of the existing house. The proposed use of slate would be an improvement.
11. Overall, I consider that the proposed conversion from hip to gable would improve the appearance of the building and make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area. The lack of a cohesive form of development in this part of the conservation area means that there is no inherent group value to be adversely affected by alterations to an individual building.
12. With regard to the other, smaller elements, I consider that they would introduce discordant elements which would detract from the improvement brought about by the conversion. The proposed dormer window, even as reduced in size compared to an earlier proposal and considered in the context of the enlarged roof, would be excessive in size, particularly in terms of its

- width. I accept that it would be at the rear and therefore not readily visible from public viewpoints. However, in my view, the provision of a dormer of this width in order to line it up with the first floor windows below it would result in a feature which would appear out of scale with building as a whole, contrary to policy QD14 and the advice in SPD12.
13. I consider that the number of proposed rooflights to the front and front gable, which would be visible from the street, would be excessive and would result in a cluttered appearance when viewed from the street. I appreciate the desirability of providing as much light as possible into the new living accommodation. However, I am not persuaded that this number of rooflights and their locations are acceptable in the conservation area and in this respect they are not consistent with policy HE6 and the advice in SPD12.
  14. I have considered the examples of dormers and rooflights elsewhere in the vicinity. While some of them may have been granted planning permission, rather than have been constructed under permitted development rights, in my view, they do not necessarily contribute positively to the character and appearance of the conservation area. In the case of rooflights, this is particularly so where there are several on one building visible from the street. I see no reason to allow further examples.
  15. The existing chimneys are important and attractive features which add interest to the existing building and to the street scene in general. Their decorative form is characteristic of several other houses along the street and their impact is increased by their height above the roof plane. The loss of the chimney at the rear on the east side would to some extent diminish the interest in the street scene provided by such a feature. However, since it is less visible than the other two more prominent chimneys which would remain, I consider that this would not be sufficient reason, on its own, to dismiss the appeal.
  16. In conclusion, I find that the main part of the proposal, the conversion of the roof from hip to gable is acceptable in the context of a street scene where there is no cohesive form of development, and that it would improve the appearance of the host building and enhance the character and appearance of the conservation area. On the other hand, I find that the smaller elements, namely the dormer window and rooflights, would detract from the overall form and appearance of the remodelled roof and consequently of the building as a whole and the street scene. In this respect, they would not preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the conservation area.
  17. I conclude that, on balance, the principle of the roof conversion is acceptable, but that the overall design falls short of the high standard required in the conservation area in that it is poorly detailed in terms of the size of the proposed dormer and the number of rooflights. The proposal would have a harmful impact on the townscape of the conservation area and would therefore fail to preserve or enhance its character and appearance. It would be contrary to City Plan policies QD14 and HE6 and the advice in the SPDs.
  18. For the reasons given above I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

*PAG Metcalfe*

INSPECTOR

