

APP/14/01049 – 19 Bath Road, Emsworth

Two separate applications have been submitted for similar works. This application and the development at 16 Bath Road (APP/14/01043) pose similar issues.

The work at this property is limited to the conversion of the attic space. Being an end terrace property with a hipped roof the headroom is limited. The building's contribution to the character of the area lies primarily in its public presence to the Harbour. The rear of the property is screened from public view by the surrounding development.

To achieve the headroom for the stairs a rather ungainly and bulky dormer addition is required. In my view this will be a detrimental change but not one that will directly harm the character of the conservation area. Other consequential changes are the removal of the current chimney stack and its replacement in dummy form and the provision of roof lights in the primary front elevation.

The adopted Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Plan for Emsworth highlights how the cumulative effect of relatively modest changes (often exempt from planning control) can erode and begin to undermine the character of the conservation area to its overall detriment. When determining planning applications the local planning authority has a duty to ensure the resulting impact of the development either preserves (neutral impact) or enhances the character and appearance of the area.

Whereas the dormer addition will have a neutral impact on the public realm (because it can not be seen), the addition of roof lights and replacement of the chimney has the potential for causing harm. With some notable historic exceptions the present roofscape facing onto Bath Road remains largely unpunctuated. This is a positive attribute. There needs to be consistency in dealing with such proposals. The overall objective should be to minimise the punctuation of the front roofslope to a minimum and where acceptable use a well designed and placed unit to mitigate the impact. As a general rule rooflights should be limited to those essential for the utilisation of the space rather than those that are non-essential but desirable. In considering change there is a joint responsibility to achieve a solution which balances achieving the best use of the available space while minimising the visual impact. I can not support the application in its current form, but with some modification I feel a positive outcome is achievable in this case.

Changes/Modifications sought.

- (1) The chimney forms a strong visual feature in the street scene. The submitted drawings provide a rather crude representation which belies its visual interest. My concern is twofold. First whether the quality of the dummy replacement will truly provide the appropriate visual quality to mitigate the loss of the present stack. Second, its lasting durability – a plastic chimney with brick slips does not offer much confidence. What consideration has been given to the retention of the present

stack? If the use of the roof space is dependent on its removal, the acceptability needs to be measured against the quality and durability of the intended replacement. The application is lacking in this area and requires amplification to demonstrate it serves as a credible alternative. Since it forms an integral part of the proposal it is not suitable to address as a reserved matter.

- (2) There is potential to reduce the impact of the proposed roof lights through their design and location. The supporting evidence and location suggests they are for light rather than means of escape. There would therefore be an opportunity to remove the bathroom roof light, since it is desirable rather than necessary. Light and ventilation is required to the bedroom. Its impact could be mitigated without compromising the accommodation by locating to the side, less visually prominent roof slope (hip). . If necessary it would be reasonable to retain one rooflight on the front elevation which is well placed and of appropriate design. That is a more traditional form of roof light which sits tight in the roof plane and sub-divided vertically e.g. Velux GGL Conservation Roof light, Roof light Company etc.

Summary

The proposals as set out would be detrimental to the character and appearance of the conservation area. The dormer itself, while bulky and ungainly, will have negligible impact due to its location and surrounding development. My concern relates to the attendant changes. I feel there is scope to satisfactorily mitigate this for which I have provided detailed suggestions above.

John Townsend
Conservation Consultant

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