



Strategic Place Planning

Report of Handling

Site Address:	57 Blenheim Place, Aberdeen, AB25 2DZ
Application Description:	Formation of linked dormer to rear and replacement windows to front, side and rear
Application Ref:	211241/DPP
Application Type:	Detailed Planning Permission
Application Date:	25 August 2021
Applicant:	Mr Keith Varney
Ward:	Hazlehead/Queen's Cross/Countesswells
Community Council:	Queen's Cross and Harlaw
Case Officer:	Jemma Tasker

RECOMMENDATION

Refuse.

APPLICATION BACKGROUND

Site Description

The application site is located on the western side of Blenheim Place, immediately across from the junction with Osborne Place and adjacent to a car park which sits along the southern boundary, related to the Blenheim House office building, currently occupied by EY (formerly known as Ernst and Young) and The Wood Foundation. The property backs on to a rear lane that runs between, and parallel to, Blenheim Place and Fountainhall Road.

The property is an upper floor flat that forms part of a traditional granite, 2 storey, semi-detached property. All windows relating to the upper floor flat are white, metal, sash and case units. The rear (west) roofslope contains 2 piended dormers which mirror the adjoining property. The surrounding area is characterised by properties of a similar architectural character. The vast majority of the roofs of these properties – notably on the western side of Blenheim Place – contain either piended dormers or rooflights. The site lies within the Albyn Place and Rubislaw Conservation Area.

Relevant Planning History

Application Number	Proposal	Decision Date
200660/DPP	Alteration of rear dormers and new replacement windows	14.08.2020 Status: Refused. This decision was subject of Local Review Body (LRB) review. The decision to refuse permission was upheld.

120878	Formation of double garage as part of garage construction across whole plot width	08.08.2012 Status: Approved Unconditionally.
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APPLICATION DESCRIPTION

Description of Proposal

Detailed Planning Permission (DPP) is sought for the extension of the existing dormers to the rear (west) elevation of the building and the installation of replacement windows to the front (east), rear (west) and side (south) elevations of the property.

It is proposed to infill the area between the two end haffits of the existing dormers, forming a dormer which would total a maximum 6.8m in width. The infill area would consist of an additional sash and case window and slate roof tiles. The pitched roofs of the existing dormers would be removed and a large flat roof created, finished with a dark grey single membrane, giving the dormer a maximum height of 2.5m. The result of these changes is that a large box dormer would be formed.

Consent is also sought for the replacement of windows on the front (east), rear (west) and side (south) elevations of the building. The existing metal sash and case windows would be replaced by timber sash and case, double glazed units.

Supporting Documents

All drawings can be viewed on the Council's website at:

<https://publicaccess.aberdeencity.gov.uk/online-applications/applicationDetails.do?activeTab=documents&keyVal=QYE3U3BZN2400>

CONSULTATIONS

Queen's Cross and Harlaw Community Council – No comments received.

REPRESENTATIONS

None.

MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS

Legislative Requirements

Sections 25 and 37(2) of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 require that where, in making any determination under the planning acts, regard is to be had to the provisions of the Development Plan and that determination shall be made in accordance with the plan, so far as material to the application unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Section 64 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Scotland) Act 1997 requires that special attention shall be paid to the desirability or preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the conservation area.

National Planning Policy and Guidance

Scottish Planning Policy (SPP)

Historic Environment Policy for Scotland (HEPS)

Aberdeen Local Development Plan (2017) (ALDP)

Policy D1 – Quality Placemaking by Design

Policy D4 – Historic Environment
Policy H1 – Residential Areas

Supplementary Guidance

The Householder Development Guide (HDG)

Proposed Aberdeen Local Development Plan (2020)

The Proposed Aberdeen Local Development Plan (Proposed ALDP) was approved at the Council meeting of 2 March 2020. A period of representation in public was undertaken from May to August 2020 and the Proposed ALDP has since been submitted to the Scottish Government Planning and Environmental Appeals Division for Examination in Public. The Proposed ALDP constitutes the Council's settled view as to what the final content of the next adopted ALDP should be and is now a material consideration in the determination of planning applications. The Aberdeen Local Development Plan 2017 will continue to be the primary document against which applications are considered. The exact weight to be given to matters contained in the Proposed ALDP (including individual policies) in relation to specific applications will depend on whether –

- such matters have or have not received representations as a result of the period of representations in public for the Proposed ALDP;
- the level of representations received in relation to relevant components of the Proposed ALDP and their relevance of these matters to the application under consideration.

The foregoing can only be assessed on a case-by-case basis. Policies of relevance include:

Policy D1 – Quality Placemaking
Policy D2 – Amenity
Policy D6 – Historic Environment
Policy D8 – Windows and Doors
Policy H1 – Residential Areas

Other Material Considerations

Albyn Place and Rubislaw Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Plan (July, 2013)

HES Managing Change in the Historic Environment: Windows and Roofs
Application Reference 200660/DPP

EVALUATION

Planning permission was refused in August 2020 for alterations to the rear dormers, to form one large dormer, and new replacement windows. This application was essentially the same as the one currently under consideration with the only difference being that the infill panel and haffits were previously to be larch cladding and are now proposed to be slate tiles and the projection of the eaves has been reduced slightly. The application was refused for the following reasons:

'The proposed dormer creates significant tension with the Householder Development Guide and HES's Managing Change guidance relating to roofs through the removal of the traditional dormers. The unsympathetic dormer extension would be a considerable mass on the rear elevation of the original building, which is prominently visible from the adjacent car park and rear service lane. Alterations along the other rear elevations nearby have been designed with due consideration for the context of the area but the proposed dormer extension would be at odds with that context.

Therefore, overall, the proposal would have a detrimental impact on the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and would thus fail to comply with Scottish Planning Policy; Historic Environment Policy for Scotland; Policies D1 (Quality Placemaking by Design), H1 (Residential

Areas) and D4 (Historic Environment) of the Adopted Aberdeen Local Development Plan; Policies D1, D2, D6, D8 and H1 of the Proposed Aberdeen Local Development Plan; and guidance contained within the Householder Development Guide and HES's Managing Change Guidance relating to roofs'. The applicant sought to have that decision reviewed by the Local Review Body (LRB). The decision to refuse planning permission was upheld by the LRB.

Principle of Development

The application site is located in a residential area, under Policy H1 (Residential Areas) of the ALDP and the proposal relates to householder development. The proposal would comply with this policy in principle provided it does not constitute overdevelopment; does not adversely affect the character and amenity of the surrounding area; does not result in a loss of open space; and it complies with the associated Supplementary Guidance.

This proposal would not enlarge the built footprint of the property and would not significantly increase the intensity of use on the site; therefore, it would not constitute overdevelopment or result in the loss of open space. Other issues are assessed in the evaluation below.

Design and Scale

To determine the effect of the proposal on the character of the area it is necessary to assess it in the context of Policy D1. This policy recognises that not all development will be of a scale that makes a significant placemaking impact but recognises that good design and detail adds to the attractiveness of the built environment. The six qualities of placemaking referred to Policy D1 requires development to reinforce the established pattern of development and to reflect local style and urban form.

Replacement Windows

The principle of replacing the existing windows in the property is acceptable, given that they are not original, subject to ensuring that the new windows would be compliant with all relevant Supplementary Guidance and that they would adequately preserve the character and appearance of the surrounding conservation area.

The windows earmarked for replacement are modern metal framed units and are clearly not original or historic to the property. The applicant seeks to replace such windows with double glazed, timber framed, one-over-one sash and case windows, the details of which are considered to be acceptable and in line with the Supplementary Guidance: 'The Repair and Replacement of Windows and Doors', representing an improvement on the basis of reinstating a more faithful window material.

Dormer Extension

One of the general principles of the Householder Development Guide is that dormers should be architecturally compatible in design and scale with the original house and its surrounding area. The Guide also states, "on traditional properties, original dormers must be retained and repaired, and their removal and/or replacement with larger or modern dormers will not be permitted". Whilst the drawings indicate that the new dormers would be formed between the existing two outer hafts (thus, it is assumed that those hafts would be retained), the remainder and thus the substantial part of both dormers would be removed, in direct conflict with the stated requirement of the Householder Development Guide that such dormers must be retained.

The rear elevations of the properties on the western side of Blenheim Place (south of Desswood Place) and the majority to the east of Blenheim Place are similar in their appearance and architectural details, and a significant contributing factor to this similarity is that all but two of the properties of this house type in the surrounding area contain pitched dormers, rooflights or nothing at all. While there is no specific uniformity across the roofslopes, any alterations or

additions are sympathetic, subservient, traditional dormer additions or rooflights. This similarity across such a large number of properties – and importantly the omission of flat roof dormers – is a contributing factor to the character and appearance of the area.

Additionally, the rear elevation of the building, despite being of secondary importance architecturally, is clearly visible from several public viewpoints, being prominently visible from the adjacent car park and the rear service lane.

It is considered that the proposed dormer would appear somewhat visually dominant on the roofslope, especially in comparison to neighbouring properties, covering some 44% of the roofslope. The dormer would be a considerable mass compared to neighbouring buildings, which typically contain rooflights, or 1 or 2 piended dormers. Additionally, through the incorporation of a flat roof, it would contrast significantly with that traditional style of the dormers in the immediate area, and thus the non-traditional architectural form would be inappropriate in this particular instance.

Because of its extended form and flat roof design, the proposed dormer would result in the loss of similarity to this line of residential properties and thus would have a significant adverse impact of the character of the surrounding area, in conflict with Policy H1. It would not reflect the established pattern of development and urban form, in conflict with Policy D1 and thus would be detrimental to the character of the surrounding area.

Furthermore, this proposal could set a precedent for similar proposals which could be granted planning permission under current policies and guidance, which cumulatively would be significantly detrimental to the character of the surrounding area.

While the proposed dormer extension would comply with some of the specific guidelines relating to dormers contained within the Householder Development Guide, the overriding determining factor, and statutory duty of the Planning Authority, is the consideration of the impact of the proposal on the character and appearance of the surrounding area, which is also a conservation area. The proposed enlargement to extend the dormer would comprise the removal of the traditional dormers, located in a publicly visible location. It would result in the loss of similarity of this part of Blenheim Place, creating a dormer at odds with the context of the surrounding area. It would therefore be detrimental to the character of the surrounding area, in conflict with Policy H1, it would not conform with the qualities of successful placemaking in conflict with Policy D1 in that it would not reinforce the established pattern of development and reflect local styles and urban form, and it would conflict with the Supplementary Guidance: 'The Householder Development Guide' in that it would include the removal of traditional dormers and would not be architecturally compatible in design and scale with the original building in the context of the surrounding area.

Impact on the Historic Environment

Scottish Planning Policy (SPP), Historic Environment Policy for Scotland (HEPS) and Policy D4 (Historic Environment) of the ALDP all seek to ensure that new development in conservation areas either preserves or enhances the character and appearance of the conservation area. An assessment of the impact of the proposals on the character of the area is made in the foregoing evaluation and the same principles apply to the impact of the proposals on the character and appearance of the wider Albyn Place and Rubislaw conservation area.

The replacement windows would see an improvement on the existing situation; therefore, having a positive impact on the character and appearance of the conservation area.

However, the proposed dormer would be in direct conflict with HES's Managing Change Document – Roofs, which states that 'early historic dormers should be retained. The addition of

new features to principal or prominent roofslopes should generally be avoided. New dormers and rooflights should be appropriately designed and located with care'. The enlargement of the existing rear dormer would, in effect, remove the existing traditional design of the dormers and create a considerably large mass on the roofslope which is unsympathetic to the traditional scale and form of the original building. The rear elevations of the surrounding properties on the western side of Blenheim Place do not see any flat roof dormer additions; the vast majority of any existing dormers have been designed, sited and scaled with due consideration for the context of the original properties. In the current context, the proposed enlargement to create a large flat roof dormer to the application property would contribute to the incremental increase in insensitive alterations to roof spaces which would harm the prevailing character and appearance of the Albyn Place and Rubislaw Conservation Area. It is considered that the proposed works would detrimentally affect the character and appearance of the property's rear elevation, prominently visible from the adjacent car park and rear service lane, and that of the wider conservation area. The proposal therefore fails to comply with the principles of SPP, HEPS, Policy D4 of the ALDP and HES's Managing Change Document – Roofs.

Impact on Residential Amenity

The proposal would not adversely impact neighbouring residential amenity in terms of privacy, sunlight and background daylight, in accordance with Policies H1 and D1 of the ALDP, and the HDG.

Proposed Aberdeen Local Development Plan (2020)

In relation to this particular application, the Policies D1, D2, D6, D8 and H1 in the proposed Aberdeen Local Development Plan 2020 substantively reiterate those in the adopted Local Development Plan and the proposal is not acceptable in terms of both Plans for the reasons previously given.

Conclusion

The proposed windows are considered to be of an acceptable design, scale and materials which would not adversely affect the character and appearance of the building or the Albyn Place and Rubislaw conservation area, in accordance with the Supplementary Guidance: 'The Repair and Replacement of Windows and Doors' and HES's Managing Change guidance relating to windows.

However, the proposed dormer does not address the reasons why the previously planning application was refused (the detrimental impact on the character and appearance of the conservation area and consequent conflict with national and local planning policy and guidance, due to the removal of the traditional dormers and the provision of an unsympathetic dormer extension of considerable mass on the rear elevation of the original building, which is prominently visible from the adjacent car park and rear service lane). The fundamental tensions with policy and guidance have not been addressed and thus remain, with the proposal being essentially the same with only minor changes having been made to its design and external finishes. Therefore, the Planning Authority's position has not changed and, as before, the proposed dormer extension is unacceptable and creates significant tension with the Householder Development Guide and HES's Managing Change guidance, in that the works would be unsympathetic and would impact on the visual amenity and character of the surrounding area. In light of this, and due to the significant conflicts with relevant policies and guidance, the Planning Authority are not on a position to support the proposal.

RECOMMENDATION

Refuse.

REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION

The proposed dormer creates significant tension with the Householder Development Guide and HES's Managing Change guidance relating to roofs through the removal of the traditional dormers. The unsympathetic dormer extension would be a considerable mass on the rear elevation of the original building, which is prominently visible from the adjacent car park and rear service lane. Alterations along the other rear elevations nearby have been designed with due consideration for the context of the area but the proposed dormer extension would be at odds with that context. Therefore, the proposal would have a detrimental impact on the character and appearance of the conservation area and would thus fail to comply with Scottish Planning Policy; Historic Environment Policy for Scotland; Policies D1 (Quality Placemaking by Design), H1 (Residential Areas) and D4 (Historic Environment) of the Adopted Aberdeen Local Development Plan; Policies D1, D2, D6, D8 and H1 of the Proposed Aberdeen Local Development Plan; and guidance contained within the Householder Development Guide and HES's Managing Change Guidance relating to roofs. There are no material planning considerations of sufficient weight which would warrant approval of planning permission in this instance.