

GPCC: 22/00888/FUL - Loft conversion with new rooflights & balconies at 86 Relugas Road

Summary: This application is to provide within existing loft space additional accommodation comprising a new studio/workshop and bathroom with new access stairway from the first floor. 86 Relugas Road is the first floor flat of a building on two floors, with 84 the ground floor flat in separate ownership with a separate front door. 86 has its own front door at ground level with half stairway up with landing and remaining stair to the right to the upper floor comprising 86. At the half landing, stairs down lead to a rear exit to path to the garden of 86, the northern half of the back garden plot.

On the front elevation of this building 4 new rooflights are to be installed, together with an accessible balcony system replacing the roof of the existing pair of tripartite bay windows, plus PV panels. At the rear 3 new rooflights are to be provided, plus replacing and enlarging existing windows, and a new dormer with bi-fold doors to access a flat roof deck formed by replacing the existing pitched roof over the kitchen. PV panels are also to be installed.

Validity of Application: The application warrants that no new or additional residential flat is being created. However, the way the access to the additional loft accommodation is to be configured means that it would not be necessary to enter the first floor flat to access the new accommodation, hinting at the creation of a separate studio flat, which the proposed additional bathroom also facilitates. It would simplify access to go through the existing flat.

Furthermore, the application states that the applicant is the owner of all the land. The Grange Association has clarified with the owner of the ground floor flat 84 that there is shared liability between 84 and 86 for repair of the roof, chimney stacks etc. Any change to the roof would affect the interests and liability of 84, requiring due notice which we understand has not been given. It may also be that 84 and 86 jointly own the land on which the building sits. What seems clear is that 86 cannot be the sole owner of the land, contrary to what the application states. Whilst ownership as such may not be a planning matter, an incorrect statement on a planning application about ownership would be.

Grange/Prestonfield Community Council (GPCC) suggests that as submitted this is an invalid application for the reasons stated above.

Proposed Use: The application also warrants that no non-residential floorspace is being created, but the purpose for which the new studio/workshop is required is not stated, neither does the application propose any change of use class of the premises. It is not clear whether anything is intended which would bring the proposed use within the scope of CEC Guidance for Businesses. GPCC requests that the proposed use or uses of the new studio/workshop be clarified during the assessment of this application to ensure that there would be no additional risk of nuisance or loss of amenity to neighbours from the intended activities and that these uses would be compatible with 86 continuing as a single residential flat in this residential area.

Streetscape: The north side of Relugas Road where this site is located has a coherence of style and form strengthening the character of its street elevation. The long continuous terrace is a series of shorter connected terraces of dwellings of broadly similar style, form and materials, characterised by tripartite bay windows on the ground and first floor of each pair of flatted dwellings, with an elevational feature of regularly spaced chimney breasts.

Comments on the detail: This discordant arrangement of rooflights, removal of the bay window roof and its replacement with an accessible roof balcony system and the very visible PV panels would be alien intrusions detrimental to the character of the pair of dwellings comprising 84 & 86 and the streetscape generally. The current consistency and symmetry of the frontages in this terrace along Relugas Road would be destroyed by the changed roofline.

The proposed balcony at second floor level would be directly above and overlook the front garden of the ground-floor property at No 84. Moreover, it would overlook the front gardens of neighbours who enjoy this south facing sun trap for relaxation, intruding on their privacy. These properties comprise flatted dwellings on the ground floors and first floors and owners of ground floor flats value the amenity of their south-facing front gardens.

At the rear, the proposal is for an intrusive 16sq.m balcony at second floor level, immediately overlooking a rear garden below, not owned by the applicants. The private rear garden of 84 would be overlooked fully by this proposed balcony. Furthermore, the northern end of the proposed balcony would provide a vantage point for viewing directly into the ground floor rear windows of 84. This is not an acceptable arrangement for future occupiers of 84.

Conclusions: As well as being an invalid application as submitted, GPCC considers that this scheme would be in conflict with aspects of LDP Policies Des1 and Des4 and particularly Des12 Alterations and Extensions in failing to be compatible with the existing character and would result in loss of privacy and be detrimental to neighbourhood amenity. It would also not comply with CEC Guidance for Householders. Therefore GPCC objects to this application.