

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 7 November 2016

by Alison Partington BA (Hons) MA MRTPI

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

Decision date: 14th November 2016

Appeal Ref: APP/V4250/D/16/3156014

8 Wotton Drive, Ashton-in-Makerfield WN4 8XR

- 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 and Mrs Harwood against the decision of Wigan Metropolitan Borough Council.
 - The application Ref A/16/82491/HH, dated 9 May 2016, was refused by notice dated 4 July 2016.
 - The development proposed is a loft conversion to provide 2no habitable rooms including raising ridge height and dormer windows to front and rear elevations.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue in the appeal is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the host property and the surrounding area.

Reasons

3. The appeal property is located on a residential estate that mainly comprises detached houses. Although of a similar age, the design of the dwellings and their roofs vary considerably, but whilst land levels drop across the estate, as this is quite gradual houses are largely a similar heights to those surrounding them. The appeal property forms part of a row of 4 houses set perpendicular to the adjacent roads. An area of landscaping lies in front of these dwellings, and a group of mature trees on this area partially screens the views of No 8, especially in summer. However, views of the house, and its immediate neighbours, are still possible from parts of Moxon Way.
 4. The existing roof is approximately one third of the height of the property which is in proportion for a two storey dwelling, and is similar to the majority of the other houses in the area. As a result of the proposal, the ridge height would be increased by 1m. This would significantly increase the height of the roof in relation to the rest of the dwelling. As a result it would no longer be in scale and proportion, and would lead to the roof dominating the dwelling. As a consequence the resulting building would appear unbalanced and 'top heavy' to the detriment of its character and appearance.
 5. Whilst there is a variety in the roof types found in the vicinity, there is, overall, a significant level of consistency in both the ridge height and roof pitch on the properties. Although the proposed roof would retain its current design, the increase in its height and pitch would result in the dwelling appearing an
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- incongruous feature in the area, especially given the consistency in this regard that currently exists with the immediately adjacent houses. Given that this row of houses is quite prominent when viewed from Moxon Way, the proposal would have an unacceptable impact on the street scene.
6. Although, many of the houses in the area have small gable features in the roof, I observed that dormer windows are generally not a feature on the houses on the estate, even though it has been suggested that a number of other houses have had their lofts converted. The front dormers would be set down from the ridge line and in from the gables, but the rear dormer would almost be the full height and width of the roof plane. As such it would be a disproportionate size and scale, and would appear an unsympathetic addition to the property in views of it that would be possible from both Moxon Way, and the gardens of the properties to the rear.
 7. The appellant has stated that the rear dormer would be permitted development if it was not for the increase in the roof height. Be that as it may, the size and scale of the proposed rear dormer does, to a certain extent, result from this increase in the height of the roof.
 8. Overall, I consider that the proposed development would adversely affect the character and appearance of the host property and the surrounding area. Of the policies in the *Wigan Local Plan Core Strategy (adopted September 2013)* referred to by the Council, I consider Policy CP10 to be most relevant to this case. Accordingly, the proposal would conflict this policy which seeks to ensure that development respects the character of the area, and integrates effectively with the surroundings.
 9. In support of the appeal, my attention was drawn to a number of other houses in the wider area whose extensions have included alterations to the roof. It was suggested that some of these had a far greater impact on the character and appearance of the area. However, I do not have the full details of the circumstances that led to these proposals being accepted, including in respect of the development plan policy that applied at the time, the consistency in the design and height of buildings and roofs in the area, and the nature of the dwellings before they were extended. In any event, some of those I saw confirmed that inappropriate alterations to the roof of a property can be detrimental to the character and appearance of the area, and so do not set a precedent that should be followed. Thus they do not justify allowing a poorly designed scheme on this dwelling.
 10. I note the personal circumstances of the appellants that result in the desire for more bedroom space. However, personal circumstances seldom outweigh more general planning considerations, and it is likely that the proposal would remain long after the current personal circumstances cease to be material. In addition, whilst I understand that pre-application advice from the Council had been positive, and I appreciate the appellant's annoyance in this regard, this represents the informal view of an Officer, not the formal decision of the Council.
 11. For the reasons set out above, I conclude the appeal should be dismissed.

Alison Partington

INSEPECTOR