

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 20 December 2016

by V Lucas-Gosnold LLB MCD MRTPI

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

Decision date: 5th January 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/M2372/D/16/3160796

4 Vicarage Drive, Darwen, Lancashire, BB3 3RE

- 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 Colin West against the decision of Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 10/16/0832, dated 22 July 2016, was refused by notice dated 22 September 2016.
 - The development proposed is a roof lift to extend existing bedroom space.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the development proposed on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

3. No. 4 is a detached bungalow situated on a mature residential estate. The majority of dwellings in the surrounding area close to No. 4 are also detached bungalows. The land levels along Vicarage Drive slope downwards quite steeply from its junction with Priory Drive towards Rectory Close. The dwellings along Vicarage Drive reflect the topography of the area and the ridge heights of the dwellings along it are stepped, following the slope of the highway downwards. This is particularly evident in the group of three bungalows of which No. 4 forms part. Nos. 2, 4 and 6 are all detached bungalows of similar appearance and the roofs of the dwellings follow the stepped ridge height design which defines the character of the area close to the appeal site. Specifically, the ridge height of No. 2 is slightly higher than No.4, whereas the ridge height of No. 6 is slightly lower. As this design feature reflects the local topography of the area, it makes a highly positive contribution to the streetscene and establishes a harmonious rhythm of development along Vicarage Drive.
 4. The development proposed would see a roof extension to extend bedroom space at the appeal property. Whilst the front eaves level would remain the same as the existing dwelling, the ridge height would be increased by approximately 979mm which would also extend the roof slope.
 5. Policy RES E12 of the Council's Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) explains how increasing the height of a dwelling by amending the roof can significantly affect the character and proportions of a building and can impact
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upon the surrounding streetscene. It also explains that as a consequence, such changes are unlikely to be acceptable in areas where roof pitches and height are consistent, as it could cause detriment to the streetscape altering its rhythm and form.

6. In the case of the appeal proposal, the ridge heights of neighbouring dwellings are consistent in so far as they are stepped to reflect the downward slope of the Drive. Increasing the ridge height of No. 4 would seriously disrupt this positive design feature and it would fail to reflect the pattern of development along the Drive. It would also detract from the harmonious visual symmetry that exists between the group of 3 similar dwellings of which No. 4 forms part. For these reasons, the development proposed would significantly detract from the visual appearance of the dwelling itself and it would be harmful to the established character of the area.
7. I note the appellant's references to other buildings and dwellings in the area with different ridge heights and also the design of a nearby store. Whilst there may be some slight diversity in the streetscene in the wider area, that is not the case along Vicarage Drive and this forms the close context against which I have assessed the appeal proposal. The overall policy requirement is not that all dwellings must look identical, rather that where there are established features that contribute positively to the character and appearance of an area, new development proposals should reflect and respect this. I have found that in this case, the development proposed would not be consistent with these design objectives. The appellant has also referred to a fallback position of installing a dormer, window should this appeal be unsuccessful. There is no firm evidence before me, in the form of specific plans or drawings, to indicate that this is their settled intent. However, during the site visit I observed the neighbouring dwelling already has a dormer window on the side elevation of the roof slope and they are therefore established features in the area.
8. Accordingly, I conclude on this issue that the development proposed would be harmful to the character and appearance of the area. The proposal would therefore conflict with Policy 11 of the Local Plan Part 2, Site Allocations and Development Management Policies (Adopted 2015) and the SPG which, together, seek to ensure that new development enhances and reinforces the established character of the locality; and that alterations to roof heights will only be allowed where the proposed alteration would not unacceptably affect the character of the streetscene.

Other Matters

9. I acknowledge that the appeal proposal is intended to provide accommodation for a family member. Whilst I have taken that into account in my determination of this appeal, it does not outweigh the harm that I have identified above.

Conclusion

10. For the reasons given above, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

V Lucas-Gosnold

INSPECTOR