

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 27 April 2017

by L Gibbons BA (Hons) MRTPI

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

Decision date: 19 May 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/X0360/D/17/3171636

28 Conygree Close, Lower Early, Reading RG6 4XE

- 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 Mrs Helen Davies against the decision of Wokingham Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 170073, dated 10 January 2017, was refused by notice dated 7 March 2017.
 - The development proposed is the formation of habitable room in roofspace with rear dormer.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matter

2. For the sake of clarity I have used the description of development as set out on the planning application form.
3. The appellant refers to amendments to the scheme to reduce the size and changes to the design of the dormer. However, no such plans are before me and I have determined the appeal on the basis of the plans that were before the Council when it made its decision.

Main Issues

4. The main issues are:
 - i) The effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the area, and;
 - ii) The effect of the proposed development on the living conditions of the occupiers of No 25 Conygree Close in respect of privacy.

Reasons

Character and appearance

5. The appeal site is located within a residential area. The properties are a mix of detached and terraced houses in a variety of styles and designs. No 28 Conygree Close is part of a small group of houses which have slight differences in their design although the rear roof-scape is simple in appearance. The rear roof-scape can be seen from Conygree Close to the south west of the appeal site including from the road and pavements in that area.
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6. I have been referred to the Council's Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) 2012. This refers to alterations and extensions responding positively to the context, maintaining or enhancing the street scene and local character. It also refers to dormer windows being generally positioned within the main roof, by being set back from both eaves and the sides of the roof.
7. The proposal would incorporate a flat roof dormer. The dormer would be set back slightly from the eaves although it would be very close to the adjoining roof. The size and bulk of the dormer would be significant in the context of the scale of the house and would obscure the majority of the roof. The dormer would have a ridge height that would be the same as the original roof and this would add to its prominence. The rear dormer would appear as a very prominent feature when seen from vantage points on Conygree Close.
8. I have been referred to dormer loft conversions including on Moorhen Drive and Privett Close which are within the local area including some designed by the appellant's architect. I note that there are similarities in the design between the appeal scheme and the examples. However, I do not have the full details of the circumstances that led to these proposals being accepted or indeed whether they have planning permission. I cannot be sure that they represent a direct parallel to the appeal proposal. In any case I have determined the appeal on its own merits.
9. For the reasons given above, I conclude that the proposed development would cause harm to the character and appearance of the area. It would be in conflict with Policies CP1 and CP3 of the Wokingham Core Strategy (CS) 2010. These amongst other things seek new development that maintain or enhance the high quality of the environment, and are of an appropriate scale of activity, mass, layout, built form, height, materials and character together with a high quality of design. It would be contrary to the SPD and to the provisions of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) in respect of the need for high quality design.

Living conditions

10. No 25 Conygree Close is to the west of the appeal site. The rear elevation of No 28 faces the blank side elevation of No 25. When standing directly next to the window of the rear first floor bedroom of No 28, the rear gardens of a number of properties can be seen. Some limited views of gardens between all the properties within this area would be possible due to the layout of the development. I note that the SPD refers to a back to flank distance of 15 metres between properties. The distance between No 25 and 28 is approximately 11 metres.
11. However, the views of No 25 are partial views as the garden is at an angle to No 28. The proposed dormer window would allow some additional visibility of the garden but this would not be significant, and the space nearest to the house of No 25 would remain private. Taking account of the existing inter-visibility between the properties within the area, I consider that the proposal would not result in a material increase in overlooking towards No 25.
12. For the reasons given above, I conclude that the proposed development would not cause harm to the living conditions of the occupiers of No 25 Conygree Close in respect of privacy. It would not be in conflict with the second part of

bullet a) of Policy CP3 of the CS where it relates to the amenities of adjoining land users or occupiers and their quality of life. It would not be contrary to the provisions of the Framework in respect of seeking to secure a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings.

Conclusion

13. I acknowledge that the proposal would provide additional accommodation for a growing family and that they are seeking to stay within the area including being able to access the local schools. It would also provide additional accommodation for relatives when they come to visit. I have also found that the scheme would not cause harm to the living conditions of the occupiers of No 25 Conygree Close. However, the proposal would cause harm to the character and appearance of the area and this is sufficient reason to dismiss the appeal.
14. For the above reasons and having regard to all other matters raised including the support for the proposal from neighbours I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

L Gibbons

INSPECTOR