



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 18 July 2017

by JP Roberts BSc(Hons) LLB(Hons) MRTPI

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

Decision date: 27th July 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/K0425/D/17/3175460

2 Creswell Row, Marlow SL7 2QD

- 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 John Hodges against the decision of Wycombe District Council.
 - The application Ref 17/05459/FUL, dated 13 February 2017, was refused by notice dated 21 April 2017.
 - The development proposed is to extend the roof space for storage.
-

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the surrounding residential area.

Reasons

3. The appeal site is occupied by a two-storey mid-terrace dwelling located in a row of cottages facing a public footway and the rear elevations and gardens of houses on the north-east side of York Road. It is proposed to insert a dormer on the front roofslope. The dormer would be as high as the ridge of the house, and would be inset from the boundaries with the neighbouring properties and from the eaves by about 500mm. The dormer would have no windows, but would be tiled in slate to match the existing roof.
4. Policy H17 of the adopted Wycombe District Local Plan to 2011 (LP) deals with residential extensions and other alterations and provides that such development will not be permitted if, amongst other things, it would have an adverse effect on the character and appearance of the original property or on that of the surrounding area.
5. The supporting text to the policy says that proposals must normally conform to the Adopted Standards set out in Appendix 4, which sets out design guidelines for extensions. In respect of dormers, the guidelines say that they should be small, unobtrusive and designed so as to be in harmony with the existing building. It advises that generally they should be considered simply as a means of lighting and ventilating the existing roofspace, and not as an extended room pushed out into the roof pitch interfering with the original design of the existing building, and causing a visual intrusion into the street scene. Whilst these guidelines do not have the force of a development plan

policy, they nevertheless represent good design practice, to which I afford significant weight.

6. The appeal property lies in a terrace of 8 houses, none of which have dormers on the front elevation. The dormer would have a flat roof and would have a solid front elevation, lacking any windows. Its size and shape would make it extremely box-like and top-heavy, and would relate very poorly to the simple but attractive design of the dwelling and would harm the unity of the terrace. The lack of windows in the dormer would exacerbate the box-like appearance, and would add to the incongruity. The proposal would comply with none of the Council's guidelines, and it would represent poor design, contrary to one of the core planning principles set out in the National Planning Policy Framework which requires planning always to seek to secure high quality design.
7. Although the terrace does not front a road, it is nevertheless highly visible from the well-used footpath which leads towards the town centre, and it can also be seen from Cambridge Road and from further along the footpath to the north-west. The appeal property backs onto the gardens and rear elevations of houses on York Road, many of which have large dormers, similar to that proposed here. However, these are on less important rear elevations where such alterations have a less damaging impact. Many will no doubt have benefitted from permitted development rights, which exempts some dormers from the need to obtain formal planning permission in certain circumstances, a right which expressly does not apply to dormers on front elevations. Moreover they are well-separated from the footpath, and the rear gardens are enclosed by high fences and gates, and in some cases are screened by garden planting. This clearly distinguishes those developments from this one.
8. I therefore conclude on the main issue that the proposal would cause significant harm to the character and appearance of the area, and would conflict with saved LP Policy H17, and Appendix 4 to which I have referred above, as well as with LP Policy G3, which deals with general design. It would also conflict with Policy CS19 of the Wycombe Core Strategy, which deals with raising the quality of place shaping and design.

Other matters

9. The appellant has submitted several documents pertaining to his personal circumstances, and argues that these circumstances have resulted in a need for additional storage. However, it is not explained what needs to be stored and why those storage needs cannot be met elsewhere in the dwelling, which has already been extended by the addition of a porch and two-storey and single storey rear extensions. Under these circumstances, I can afford this argument only modest weight, and it does not outweigh the significant harm that I have found.

Conclusion

10. The harm that I have found is significant, and it conflicts with the development plan as a whole. For the reasons explained above, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

JP Roberts

INSPECTOR