

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 15 August 2017

by J Bell-Williamson MA MRTPI

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

Decision date: 31 August 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/M2270/D/17/3177068

30 Colbran Way, Royal Tunbridge Wells TN4 8DB

- 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 David Anstiss against the decision of Tunbridge Wells Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 17/00017/FULL, dated 4 January 2017, was refused by notice dated 8 March 2017.
 - The development proposed is the removal of the existing roof structure and re-constructed with an additional dormer roof to the rear allowing 2 additional bedrooms.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect on the character and appearance of the host dwelling and the street scene.

Reasons

3. The appeal property is a modern two storey detached dwelling in a residential estate of similar property types.
 4. Policy EN1 of the Tunbridge Wells Borough Local Plan 2006 requires, amongst other matters, that development should respect the context of the site, while Core Policy 5 of the Tunbridge Wells Core Strategy 2010 includes a criterion requiring development to conserve and enhance the public realm. These policies are broadly consistent with the National Planning Policy Framework. Core Policy 4 of the Core Strategy, also referred to by the Council, is less relevant to this case, as it concerns landscape, environmental and heritage protection and enhancement.
 5. The *Alterations and Extensions* Supplementary Planning Document (the SPD) provides details on dormer windows in support of these policies. It says that the location of dormer windows should be restricted to the rear of a dwelling in order to preserve the character of the street (paragraph 5.24); and that large dormers/roof extensions, which are disproportionate to the house, will not be allowed, as a major part of the original roof plane should remain unaffected by the proposal (paragraph 5.25).
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6. The appeal property has a pitched roof with gable ends. The pitch is relatively steep and the overall roof quite tall, giving a large roof plane to front and rear. The proposal is for a box dormer that would have a flat roof level with the existing roof ridge and inset to a limited extent from either side and up from the eaves. As such, the dormer would cover the majority of the roof plane.
7. As the dormer would be to the rear of the property, to this extent it would comply with the SPD. However, it would affect the majority of the roof plane and the additional bulk and mass created by the dormer would give the host dwelling an unbalanced appearance as it would upset its proportions, making it appear 'top heavy'. It would, therefore, be contrary to the SPD's guidance in paragraph 5.25, referred to above.
8. I accept that it would not be possible to gain substantive views of the dormer from the public realm to the front of the property, although some views to the side would be possible from the footpaths to the north of the dwelling. However, more significantly in my view, due to its elevated position and the layout of the estate, it would be highly visible from neighbouring properties and their gardens.
9. I note the appellant's reference to there being a range of properties with dormers in the village. However, all the visible properties within the area surrounding the appeal property are unaltered and reflect the original design and layout of the estate. In particular, there are no visible dormer windows to the front or rear of properties. As such, there is a high degree of uniformity to the character and appearance of properties in this part of the estate. Within this setting, the large dormer covering nearly all of the rear roof would appear as an incongruous and alien feature.
10. Accordingly, for these reasons, I conclude that the proposal would cause unacceptable harm to the host dwelling. There would be less harm to the street scene in terms of views from the public realm, and therefore limited conflict with Core Policy 5 of the Core Strategy described above, but the proposal would clearly be contrary to Policy EN1 and to the SPD, also as described above.
11. I acknowledge the personal circumstances raised by the appellant, particularly with regard to the desire to expand the appeal property to meet family needs. However, given that I have found above that the proposal would cause unacceptable harm and would be contrary to development plan policy and related guidance, this reason is not sufficient to outweigh the harm that has been identified. I acknowledge also that occupiers of neighbouring properties have not objected. However, I have to consider the effects of the current proposal in the long-term given the permanent nature of the change proposed. This involves considering the effects on current and future occupiers who would see the dormer from the surrounding area. I have, therefore, had full regard to these points made in support of the appeal but, for the reasons given, I give them limited weight and they have not led me to reach a different overall conclusion.
12. For the reasons given I conclude that that the appeal should not succeed.

J Bell-Williamson INSPECTOR