
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 4 July 2019

by G Powys Jones MSc FRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 22nd July 2019

Appeal Ref: APP/Q3115/D/19/3226798

1 Queens Road, Thame, Oxfordshire, OX9 3NF

- 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 Andrew Gilbert against the decision of South Oxfordshire District Council.
 - The application Ref P18/S3989/HH, dated 28 November 2018, was refused by notice dated 25 January 2019.
 - The development proposed is the formation of habitable rooms in roofspace with 2No front elevation dormers.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary matters

2. The appellant refers to an exchange of correspondence and consultation with the Council following the refusal of planning permission, when his proposal to relocate one of the dormers was discussed. I should clarify that I am required to determine the appeal on the basis of the plans subject of the Council's original determination, and I shall proceed accordingly.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the host property and its surroundings.

Reasons

4. The appeal property is located prominently on a corner at the junction of Queens Road and Chinnor Road. It stands at the end of a small terrace of brick-built Victorian cottages facing Chinnor Road. A similar terrace of the same age continues eastwards on the other side of the junction. The appeal property, which it seems was formerly a shop, is itself brick built, but with a rendered inset on the ground floor. It displays an unusual feature, a chamfered wall where the two principal elevations would otherwise meet, above which is a panelled hip. A brick chimney remains in place, and decorative tiles adorn the ridge.
5. As the appellant says, the property is not listed nor is it comprised within a conservation area. Nevertheless it forms part of a unified group of properties well over a century old radiating eastwards and westwards from the junction.

In combination they present an attractive face to this part of the town, contributing significantly to its pleasant character.

6. I find the proposal objectionable for two principal reasons. Firstly, the simple, plain composition of the roof would be harmfully disrupted and overwhelmed by significant alterations in a prominent location. Secondly, I consider the dormers to be poorly designed, in that they would be excessively bulky and wide, unreflective of the rhythm and proportions of the windows below. The roof as a result of this proposed development would take on a top-heavy and overdeveloped appearance proving incongruous in the street scene. A slight readjustment of the location of the southernmost dormer, as suggested, would not resolve the visual harm caused by the development.
7. I conclude that the proposal, by reason of its poor design and composition, would harm the character and appearance of the host property and its surroundings. Accordingly, a clear conflict arises with those provisions of policies D1 & H13 of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan, which in combination emphasise the importance of good design and maintaining local distinctiveness, including in house extensions, and policy CSQ3 of the Council's Core Strategy requiring that the design of new development should respond positively to and respects the character of the site and its surroundings.

Other matters

8. Reference has been made to the South Oxfordshire Design Guide, and the appellant claims that his dormers are almost identical to the ones illustrated as an acceptable form of development in section 6 of the guidance. That is plainly not the case since those illustrated in the guidance are small and proportionate in the context of the scale of the roof and dwelling.
9. All the other representations made have been taken into account, including the comments made by the Town Council.
10. I also note the references to other development plan policy, but those to which I have referred are considered the most relevant. No other matters raised are of such significance as to outweigh the considerations that led me to my conclusions.
11. Accordingly, for the reasons set out above, the appeal is dismissed.

G Powys Jones

INSPECTOR