



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 8 January 2020

by Andrew Smith BA (Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 20 January 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/V0510/D/19/3238922

103 Columbine Road, Ely, Cambs CB6 3WL

- 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 and Mrs Andrew Bowley against the decision of East Cambridgeshire District Council.
 - The application Ref 19/00715/FUL, dated 16 May 2019, was refused by notice dated 24 July 2019.
 - The development proposed is a loft conversion.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for a loft conversion at 103 Columbine Road, Ely, Cambs CB6 3WL, in accordance with the terms of the application, 19/00715/FUL, dated 16 May 2019, subject to the conditions set out at the end of this decision.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are:
 - The effect upon the character and appearance of the host dwelling and surrounding area; and
 - The effect upon the living conditions of neighbouring occupiers at Nos 65 and 67 Columbine Road, having particular regard to outlook and privacy.

Reasons

Character and appearance

3. The appeal property is situated within a modern residential estate (the estate). Properties are typically characterised by being two storey and of pitched roof design. Whilst I am of the understanding permitted development rights for new openings have been removed at the estate, at roof level there are, across the estate, several roof dormers already in existence.
4. The proposed loft conversion involves the installation of two relatively small-sized flat-roofed dormers, which would be supplemented by further small-sized rooflight openings. The dormers would be discreetly located to the property's rear roof slope and would be set away from the roof's ridge, eaves and sides. They would thus not appear as visually dominant additions to the property's roof and would not result in a property of top-heavy appearance.

5. I acknowledge that the particular part of the estate that contains the appeal site is typified by unaltered roof slopes clear of dormer additions. Nonetheless, examples of dormer features are not located far away. Indeed, perhaps most pertinently, street-facing dormers are in existence at No 71 Columbine Road, a property that is situated in the vicinity of where fleeting views of the appeal property's rear roof slope are publicly available. My inspection of the estate also highlighted the sporadic presence of flat-roofed dormers that are similarly designed to those that are proposed here.
6. I have given due regard to the Council's Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (March 2012) (the SPD), which notes that the form and proportions of a dwelling will determine the extent to which it can be extended. I am satisfied that the proposal would not add undue bulk at roof level. Indeed, the intended dormers and rooflights would appear as subservient additions to the main dwelling. I am thus content that the proposal suitably accords with the SPD's guidance.
7. For the above reasons, the proposal would not cause harm to the character and appearance of the host dwelling and surrounding area. The proposal accords with Policy ENV2 of the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan (April 2015) (the Local Plan) in so far as this policy requires that all development is designed to a high quality, enhancing and complementing local distinctiveness and public amenity by relating well to existing features and introducing appropriate new designs.

Neighbouring living conditions

8. The appeal property is positioned such that it has a back-to-back relationship with Nos 65 and 67 Columbine Road (Nos 65 and 67). The proposal, by virtue of introducing new openings to the appeal property's rear-facing roof slope, has raised concerns with respect to the effect upon neighbouring living conditions.
9. However, it is important to note that the newly intended dormer windows would be obscure glazed and only their uppermost portions would be openable. Unobscured outlook at loft level would be provided by the newly intended rooflight openings, which, where proposed to be inserted to the property's rear facing roof slope, would be of limited size and positioned at a high level. Particularly when considering the relatively generous back-to-back separation distance that is in place, I am content that the proposal would not result in a harmful loss of privacy for the residential occupiers of either No 65 or No 67.
10. The proposed dormers, being limited in size, would not have an oppressive impact when viewed from Nos 65 and 67. Indeed, being positioned beneath the appeal property's full ridge height and occupying only a relatively small percentage of the rear roof slope's total area, the dormers would not be overbearing or have an adverse effect upon available outlook from neighbouring properties.
11. For the above reasons, the proposal would not cause harm to the living conditions of neighbouring occupiers at Nos 65 and 67, having particular regard to outlook and privacy. The proposal accords with Policy ENV2 of the Local Plan in so far as this policy states that alterations to existing buildings and structures will be expected to ensure there is no significantly detrimental effect on the residential amenity of nearby occupiers.

Conditions

12. In the interests of certainty, a condition specifying the approved plans is required. To protect the character and appearance of the appeal site and its surroundings, a condition is required to ensure that the external surfaces of the development match existing building materials. This is except for the intended lead finishing to the dormers, which is a finish that has been used elsewhere on the estate and would, I consider, be acceptable here.
13. In the interests of protecting neighbouring living conditions, a further condition is reasonable and necessary to ensure that the approved dormer windows are installed in accordance with the intended details and specifications that have been put forward. As I am sufficiently content that neighbouring living conditions would be protected on this basis, I do not consider it necessary to impose a further condition requiring a sample of obscure glazing to be submitted for written approval before installation.

Conclusion

14. The proposal accords with the development plan and material considerations do not lead me to a decision otherwise. Thus, for the above reasons, the appeal is allowed subject to conditions.

Andrew Smith

INSPECTOR

Schedule of Conditions

1. The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than three years from the date of this decision.
2. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: 01/2188/19; 02/2188/19 A; 03/2188/19; 04/2188/19; 05/2188/19; 06/2188/19; 07/2188/19; 08/2188/19 A; 09/2188/19 A.
3. With the exception of the lead finishing to be used to the dormer windows as depicted on approved plan 09/2188/19 A, the materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of the development hereby permitted shall match those used on the existing building.
4. The dormer window openings hereby permitted shall, as depicted on approved plan 09/2188/19 A, be obscure glazed and openable only at a height of at least 1.7m above the internal second floor level. The openings shall be retained as installed at all times thereafter.