
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 2 January 2020 by Hannah Ellison BSc (Hons) MSc

Decision by Chris Hoults BA(Hons) BPhil MRTPI

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

Decision date: 4 February 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/X4725/D/19/3241378

10 Highfields, Havercroft, Wakefield, WF4 2EG

- 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 Gary Coldwell against the decision of Wakefield Metropolitan District Council.
 - The application Ref 19/01579/FUL, dated 29 June 2019, was refused by notice dated 27 September 2019.
 - The development proposed is a loft conversion.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Appeal Procedure

2. The site visit was undertaken by an Appeal Planning Officer whose recommendation is set out below and to which the Inspector has had regard before deciding the appeal.

Procedural Matter

3. Notwithstanding the description of the development which is taken from the application form, a more accurate description is that provided in the decision notice as 'dormer to rear'. I have considered the appeal on this basis.

Main Issue

4. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of No 10 Highfields and the wider area.

Reasons

5. This appeal concerns a semi-detached bungalow, located within a suburban residential area. The character and appearance of the immediate locality is derived in part from the uniformity in the simple form of semi-detached bungalows, the most common dwelling type, and broadly consistent ridge heights between pairs of semi-detached properties.
6. In order to accommodate the dormer, this proposal seeks to raise the ridge line of the host dwelling. Wakefield District Residential Design Guide, Supplementary Planning Document 2018 (the SPD) provides guidance for roof extensions and alterations. The SPD notes that changing the height of a roof will not usually be acceptable in areas where the roof pitches and heights in the

streetscape are consistent, and that increasing the height of a property will significantly affect the character and proportions of the building and will impact on the surrounding streetscape.

7. The proposed increase to the height of the dwelling would result in a stepped ridge line between No 10 and the attached bungalow. This would be a substantial alteration to the original appearance of the properties. It would be readily apparent from public vantage points and would appear at odds with the roofscape in the street scene, which is largely characterised by continuous ridge lines between pairs of semi-detached dwellings. The proposal would result in an incongruous addition to the street scene.
8. Additionally, the SPD notes that rear flat roof dormers should be a maximum of 3 metres wide. The proposed dormer would span much of the full width of the property, well in excess of 3 metres. As such, when combined with the increase in ridge height, the extension would be a highly visible element of the street scene, particularly on the approach to the site when travelling north along Highfields. This proposal would read as an overly dominant and top-heavy addition to the host dwelling in views from this direction.
9. My attention has been drawn to other nearby examples of dormer extensions where the ridge line of one property within a pair of semi-detached dwellings has been raised. They were observed on site and it is acknowledged they are of a similar design to the proposed development. The Council note they are significantly older approvals and that they are now trying to improve the standard of design for house extensions. It is also noted that those approvals pre-date the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework), in which chapter 12 seeks to ensure developments are of a high-quality design and visually attractive and sympathetic to local character. I do not therefore consider that the existing extensions are good examples of development to follow and as such they cannot on their own account justify the proposal.
10. Consequently, taking all the above into consideration, I conclude that the proposed development would have a harmful effect on the character and appearance of No 10 Highfields and the wider area. It is therefore contrary to policies D9 and D10 of the New Vision for Developing Wakefield District, Core Strategy. These collectively seek to ensure developments, amongst other things, respect the character of the locality and are not discordant with the style of the original dwelling or result in significant harm to the character of the area. It is also contrary to the requirements of the SPD and the Framework as set out above.

Other Matters

11. It is acknowledged that this proposal would provide additional living accommodation, which the appellant states he requires so as to remain in the property and care for a neighbouring relative. Further, the evidence suggests that the increase in ridge height is the minimum required to achieve necessary headroom. I therefore accept that it may not be possible to reduce the height further. However, whilst I do not set aside these matters lightly, they do not justify a dormer of the height and scale as proposed.
12. Concern has been raised regarding the Council's processing of the planning application, particularly regarding advice received. However, this is a matter for the Council and I have dealt with the proposal before me strictly on its merits.

13. My attention has also been drawn to a planning approval on land to the rear of the appeal site. Whilst I do not have the full details, based on the evidence before me, I do not consider that it is of direct relevance to this appeal.

Conclusion and Recommendation

14. For the reasons given above and having regard to all other matters raised, I recommend that the appeal is dismissed.

Hannah Ellison

Appeal Planning Officer

Inspector's Decision

15. I have considered all the submitted evidence and the Appeal Planning Officer's report and on that basis the appeal is dismissed.

C M Hoult

INSPECTOR