
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 17 February 2020

by Nick Davies BSc(Hons) BTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 12 March 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/D0840/D/19/3242327
25 Polmor Road, Crowlas TR20 8DW

- 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 C Payne against the decision of Cornwall Council.
 - The application Ref PA19/06651, dated 31 July 2019, was refused by notice dated 5 November 2019.
 - The development proposed is extension & alterations (to accommodate elderly family member).
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Application for costs

2. An application for costs was made by Mr and Mrs C Payne against Cornwall Council. This application is the subject of a separate Decision.

Main Issues

3. The main issues are:
 - a) The effect of the development on the character and appearance of the area;
 - b) Whether adequate car-parking would be available to serve the development; and,
 - c) The effect of the development on the living conditions of the occupants of 27 Polmor Road, with regard to outlook and light.

Reasons

Character and appearance

4. 25 Polmor Road lies within a crescent of dwellings that step down the slope from Tregender Road, to the north. It lies at the end of a terrace of two-storey houses running along the bottom of the slope, that share a common building line. On the opposite side of the road are two similar terraces, at a slightly lower level. These parallel terraces show a distinct uniformity of design and layout, characterised by simple two-storey rendered buildings under a common ridged roof. There are lean-to porches on some of the houses, and flat-roofed garages at the ends of the terraces, but at first floor and roof level there is a marked degree of symmetry. The gardens of the houses stepping down the

slope meet those of the terraces at an angle, which results in open breaks between the buildings at the corners, giving a sense of spaciousness at either end of the frontage.

5. The proposed extension would intrude into the open area at the corner of the buildings and would therefore be a prominent feature in the street scene. It would be wider than the host dwelling, and it would only be set back from the existing frontage to a minimal extent. This would be in conflict with the council's Domestic alterations and extensions guide (2017) (the DAE Guide), which advises that extensions should generally be narrower in width than the original house, and also set back so that the corner of the original building can be "read". Consequently, although the eaves and ridge would be a little lower than the main roof, the extension would still have a dominant impact on the existing building.
6. The extension would have a stepped side elevation, due to the angled nature of the garden boundary. As a result, the roof of the extension would have a complicated configuration, with two ridges and an asymmetric gable. This would be out of keeping with the simple pitched roofs that characterise these terraces, and would conflict with the DAE Guide, which advises that roof extensions should complement the original house in design. The use of horizontal boarding on the upper parts of the extension would add to its discordant appearance. Although there is some boarding on houses to the north, it is not a characteristic material of the uncomplicated rendered terraces on the lower part of the crescent.
7. In conclusion, the scale and uncharacteristically contrived design of the extension, would result in it being an intrusive and discordant feature in this prominent corner location. Consequently, it would be harmful to the character and appearance of the area. The proposal would therefore be contrary to Policies 1 and 12 of the Cornwall Local Plan (the Local Plan) which seek, amongst other things, to secure high quality sustainable design in all developments. The proposal would also conflict with the aims of Section 12 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework), to achieve well-designed places.

Car-parking

8. The house has an attached garage that is set back from the front elevation, allowing a car to be parked on the driveway in front of it. As the driveway also extends alongside the garage, there is currently off-road parking for three vehicles. The proposal involves the loss of the garage and construction of an extension further forward on the plot, resulting in a significantly shorter driveway. The appellant contends that two car-parking spaces will be retained, in accordance with the council's parking guidelines. However, whilst the driveway would be of the same width, the plans do not demonstrate that two average-sized cars could be parked on the shortened driveway without protruding over the pavement.
9. Furthermore, if two cars were parked side by side on the driveway, pedestrian access to the steps to both entrance doors would involve squeezing between the cars and boundary features and/or walking over grass. So, setting aside any concerns about the length of the driveway, the limitations of the remaining parking area would discourage its use by more than one car. Consequently, the proposal would be likely to result in an increase in on-street parking.

10. The site lies in a relatively accessible location, where access to day to day services is not entirely reliant on private transport, so a reduction in off-street parking would not be harmful if there was sufficient capacity for visitors to park on the road. However, I saw that several cars were parked on pavements in the vicinity of the site. My visit took place in the middle of a weekday, so competition for spaces is likely to be higher in the evening and at weekends. Photographic evidence, including those in the appellant's Statement of Case, indicate that parking on pavements is a regular occurrence, resulting in inconvenience for pedestrians, particularly those using wheelchairs or pushing prams. A reduction in off-street car-parking capacity on the appeal site, below the two spaces required by the council's parking guidelines, would therefore be likely to exacerbate this problem.
11. In view of these factors, I conclude that the proposal does not make adequate provision for car-parking. The development would therefore be contrary to Policy 27 of the Local Plan, which seeks to ensure safe and suitable access to the site for all people.

Living conditions

12. 27 Polmor Road is an end terraced house, which sits at an angle to the appeal site. It has a single storey attached garage close to the boundary, so the proposed extension would be some distance from the side elevation of the house itself. Light reaching the first-floor window in the gable end would therefore be largely unaffected. The main windows in No 27 face to the front and the rear so, from within the house, the extension would have little impact on the living conditions of occupants through shading or loss of outlook.
13. Due to the way that the plots converge, No 27 has a smaller rear garden than most of the other houses in the crescent. A patio area is located to the rear of the garage, close to the appeal site boundary. The two-storey extension would lie to the south and south west, so there would be some loss of direct sunlight to this private amenity area in the afternoon, at some times of the year. However, a significant gap would remain between the buildings, such that light and sunlight would continue to reach this part of the garden for much of the day, particularly in the summer months. The extension would not have a significant impact on light reaching other parts of the garden, so the occupants of No 27 would retain acceptable levels of light in the garden as a whole.
14. The extension would be quite close to the side boundary of No 27, but for the most part it would be alongside the garage and gable end of the house, which are not important to the outlook of the occupants. The north eastern corner of the extension would be close to the patio area, but the roof would slope away from this boundary. The main outlook for users of this private amenity area would be across the open rear gardens to the northwest and northeast, which would be unaffected. The proposal would not therefore have a significantly overbearing impact for occupants of the adjacent garden.
15. For these reasons, I conclude that the proposal would not have a harmful effect on the living conditions of the occupants of 27 Polmor Road, with regard to outlook and light. The development would therefore accord with Policy 12 of the Local Plan, insofar as it seeks to protect adjoining occupants from overshadowing and overbearing impacts of development. I also find no conflict in this regard with any specific advice in the Framework, the DAE Guide or the Cornwall Design Guide (2013).

Other Matters

16. The appellant draws attention to the council's Annexe Guidance Note (2018), which provides advice on residential annexes for relatives to live with their family with a degree of independence. I have not been provided with evidence of the status of this document. However, in view of my findings on the first main issue, the proposed development would not comply with criterion f) of the general policy considerations of the guidance.
17. I have also been provided with a press release announcing the council's intention to create 3,500 Extra Care housing units across the county. However, this relates to purpose-built self-contained units, rather than ancillary house extensions. Nevertheless, evidence has been provided to show that the proposal would allow the intended occupant to be cared for by her family, which would benefit her quality of life. I have considered this benefit in reaching my conclusion, but it does not outweigh the harm that I have found to the character and appearance of the area, and the inadequacy of the proposed off-street car-parking.

Conclusion

18. For the reasons given above, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Nick Davies

INSPECTOR