The Planning Inspectorate

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 10 March 2020 by G Sibley MPLAN MRTPI

Decision by Chris Preston BA (Hons) BPl MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 22 April 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/D4635/D/19/3242893
The Dormers, Finchfield Gardens, Wolverhampton WV3 9LT

- 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 T Blakemore against the decision of The City of Wolverhampton Council.
- The application Ref: 19/00985/FUL, dated 20 August 2019, was refused by notice dated 15 October 2019.
- The development proposed is described on the application form as double storey side extension.

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.

Main Issue

3. The effect of the proposed development upon the character and appearance of the host dwelling and the street scene and linked to this whether the proposal would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Bantock House Conservation Area (CA).

Reasons for the Recommendation

4. The host dwelling is located on Finchfield Gardens which is a narrow U-shaped road. It is constructed in a Dutch colonial style dwelling with three dormer windows and two matching windows with shutters either side of the main door and there is a large chimney in the centre of the roof. The steeply sloping roof is terminated by distinctive 'half-hipped' gable ends which add to the pleasing symmetry of this attractive and distinctive property. To the side of the dwelling is a single storey garage with a small connecting building. The three buildings all appear to have been constructed using the same red brick.

5. The CA includes the dwellings along Finchfield Gardens, Bantock House and gardens as well as several roads around Bantock House. The dwellings along Finchfield Gardens vary in scale and appearance but are generally large, individually designed, properties set within spacious plots set back from the roadside behind trees and hedgerows. The sense of spaciousness and the degree of separation between individual properties is a key characteristic of the

area which is a very attractive suburban environment. Finchfield Gardens does not have a pedestrian footpath which contributes to the semi-rural character that is apparent within the CA.

6. The balance and symmetry of the dwelling is integral to its attractive appearance and this is further complemented by the large central chimney. The main element of the extension would retain the same roof line and window design of the host dwelling and then there would be a small inset which would connect the two elements of the building. The inset would have a reduced roofline and smaller windows which would create a distinct visual break between the two elements of the building. Whilst that approach can sometimes be successful when seeking to distinguish between an extension and an original property the result in this case would be an elongated plan form which would be at odds with the very specific style and symmetry of the original property. The proposed extension would also result in the chimney appearing off centre which would further erode the symmetry that has been achieved in the original design. The inset with the reduced roofline combined with the off-centre chimney would unbalance the property which would result in harm to the character and appearance of the property.

7. Whilst the garage and connecting building are already in situ, they are single storey outbuildings and thus appear visually separate from and subservient to the dwelling which appears as a separate entity. The doorway in between the garage and the house is set back substantially and this enables the side elevation, including the gable windows and brick banding to be viewed such that the symmetrical form of the property is largely unaffected by the single storey additions. In contrast, the effect of the two-storey extension would be significantly greater. The link element would not be set back to any notable degree, the ability to view the features of the side of the property would be lost, and the symmetry of the property, which is key to its character, would be significantly eroded. It would also be far more visible from the street scene where the roof and first floor of the property are prominent above the perimeter hedge.

8. The dwelling is located within a spacious plot, as is common within the street scene. The proposed extension would build up to the boundary between The Dormers and the neighbouring building. Although the retained gap would be sufficient to avoid a terracing effect the reduction in the apparent separation between the neighbouring dwellings would erode the sense of openness which is an important characteristic of the Conservation Area, as noted above.

9. For the reasons given above, the proposal would result in harm to the character and appearance of the host dwelling which would result in harm to the character and appearance of the street scene. It follows that the proposal would not preserve the character or appearance of the CA and I give great weight to this harm.

10. Because the proposal would be a relatively modest addition to the CA, the harm to the significance of the asset would be less than substantial having regard to the National Planning Policy Framework (The Framework). Paragraph 196 of the Framework notes that where there is less than substantial harm that the harm needs to be balanced against any public benefits of the proposal.

11. The proposed extension would provide further accommodation for the occupiers of the dwelling, but this would be a private, rather than a public benefit of the

proposal. Consequently, there are no public benefits of the proposal that would be sufficient to outweigh the harm I find in relation to this proposal.

12. Therefore, the proposed development would unbalance the appearance of the dwelling which would result in harm to the character and appearance of the host dwelling. Whilst the proposal would not cause a terracing effect within the street scene, the proposal would cause harm to the character and appearance of the street scene and consequently would not preserve the character or appearance of the CA. The proposal would be contrary to policies D4, D6, D7, D8, D9, HE1, HE2, HE3, HE4, HE5 of the Wolverhampton Unitary Development Plan 2001 – 2011 (UDP) (2006) and Policies ENV2 and ENV3 of the Black Country Core Strategy (BCCS) (2011) in so far as they seek to ensure proposals are of an appropriate scale and ensure that the appearance of the proposal is suitable for the area. The policies also require development to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the CA.

Other Matters

13. Reference was made to two dwellings that have recently been extended and were granted planning permission to do so by the Council. Having viewed those two properties, the design of those extensions has not resulted in a terracing effect within the street scene. It is also important to note that because those dwellings are strikingly different in design terms, compared to The Dormers, the relevance of those decisions to the proposal before me is limited in terms of the effect those extensions had upon the appearance of those dwelling. The Council granting planning permission elsewhere does not justify the proposals before me.

14. A number of residents submitted comments to the Council at the application stage with regard to the effect of the proposal on daylight and overshadowing in neighbouring properties. The Council was seemingly satisfied that the impact in that regard was acceptable as those issues were not included in the reasons for refusal and, having viewed the proposal and the relationship with surrounding houses I see no reason to take a different view.

Conclusion and Recommendation

15. The proposed extension would not result in a terracing effect within the street scene. Nevertheless, the proposal would unbalance the host dwelling which would cause harm to the character and appearance of the host dwelling and the street scene and therefore would not preserve the character or appearance of the CA. For the reasons given above and having had regard to all other matters raised, I recommend that the appeal should be dismissed.

G Sibley

APPEAL PLANNING OFFICER

Inspector's Decision

16. I have considered all the submitted evidence and the Appeal Planning Officer's report, and, on that basis, I too agree that the appeal should be dismissed.

Chris Preston

INSPECTOR