
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 4 June 2020

by S Leonard BA (Hons) BTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 11 June 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/H1705/D/20/3245319
4 Petersfield Close, Chineham RG24 8WP

- 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 Ms Samantha Warner against the decision of Basingstoke & Deane Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 19/01233/HSE, dated 5 May 2019, was refused by notice dated 2 January 2020.
 - The development proposed is described as "*single storey rear kitchen extension. Dormer loft extension and re-cladding the existing property*".
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matter

2. The description of development in the heading above is taken from the application form. It differs from that on the appeal form and decision notice which is '*erection of a single storey side and rear extension, dormer loft extension, partial conversion of garage to living accommodation and re-cladding of existing property*'. My decision is based on this description, since it more accurately describes the proposal.
3. The points of difference between the parties relate to the effect of the rear dormer window and alterations to the external materials of the property on the character and appearance of the host property and the surrounding area. I do not disagree with the Council's view in respect of the proposed single storey extension. However, I have insufficient information before me to enable me to issue a split decision, since the drawings submitted with the planning application and appeal do not include a proposed ground floor plan.

Main Issue

4. The main issue is the effect of the proposed rear dormer window and alterations to the external materials of the property on the character and appearance of the host property and the wider surrounding area.

Reasons

5. The appeal property is a modern, two-storey, detached house, finished in a mix of facing brick, render and mock timber detailing under a tiled pitched roof. There is a garage to the side and a conservatory to the rear.

6. The site is situated on the east side of Petersfield Close, a cul-de-sac within a suburban housing estate, and backs onto Thornhill Way, one of the spine roads running through the estate. Petersfield Close is characterised by detached, semi-detached and terraced two-storey properties, with open plan frontages. The roofscape within the vicinity of the site appears uncluttered, and during my site inspection, I observed that dormer windows were not a characteristic feature of the street scene.
7. The proposed dormer would occupy nearly all of the rear roof slope and would dominate the roof due to its width, depth, height and position, extending to within close proximity to the main roof ridge and sitting just above the eaves line. The dormer would be sited immediately beside, and would visually overwhelm, the existing chimney feature of the building. The proposal would be at odds with the simple uncluttered roof form which is characteristic of the immediate locality. The flat roofed dormer design would be at odds with the main roof form.
8. Furthermore, notwithstanding the proposed matching window frame material, the proposed arrangement, proportion and design of the windows within the dormer would not harmonise with the style of the rear elevation windows below. They would appear over dominant and discordant in comparison to the first floor windows below, due to their proposed height, width, shape, and window opening design. The visual perception of their height would be emphasised by the narrow vertical elements of glazing, which contrast with the more horizontal design of the first-floor windows below. The fenestration design would therefore serve to draw attention to the dormer, exacerbating its incongruous, top-heavy appearance, and resulting in an unbalanced appearance to the rear elevation. The result would be a visually dominant and discordant addition to the roof. Accordingly, the proposal would have a materially harmful impact on the character and appearance of the host property.
9. Although trees adjacent to the rear site boundary provide screening of the appeal property in some views from Thornhill Way, the first floor of the building is clearly visible from the public realm of Thornhill Way, one of the main thoroughfares through the estate, when approaching from the north, as the rear boundary wall does not screen the first floor and roof elements of the building. The appeal proposal would appear as a bulky and incongruous addition to the rear roof slope, drawing the eye, and detracting from the characteristic uncluttered roofscape of the locality.
10. Black coloured roof tiles are not a common feature of the immediate area, and even though the proposed dormer would be finished in tiles to match those of the main roof, the combined effect of the proposed black roofing tiles and the dormer size and design, would serve to draw attention to the visually incongruous and over dominant impact of the proposed roof within the street scene. I therefore find that the proposal dormer window would materially harm the character and appearance of the area when viewed from within the context of Thornhill Way.
11. I observed during my site inspection, that prevalent external walling materials include various shades of red and brown brick, render and mock timber detailing, and there are a mix of window frame designs and materials. Also, the appeal property and others within the vicinity are finished with different facing

materials at ground and first floor level. Accordingly, I find that the proposed external materials and window frames would not appear unduly incongruous within this urban environment, and that these elements of the appeal scheme would not unduly harm the character and appearance of the property and the wider area.

12. The Appellant asserts that similarly designed dormers are a common feature of urban environments and do not automatically represent incongruous additions to rear roof slopes. However, my attention has not been drawn to any similar dormers within the vicinity of the appeal site, and I did not observe any during my site inspection. In any event, I must determine this appeal on the individual planning merits of the scheme before me, and within the context of the character and appearance of the existing building and the immediate locality. The existence of other rear dormers in urban areas elsewhere does not justify the harm that I have found for the reasons set out above.
13. For the above reasons, I conclude that the appeal proposal would cause significant harm to the character and appearance of the host property and the wider surrounding area. The appeal scheme would be contrary to Policy EM10 of the Basingstoke and Deane Borough Local Plan 2011 – 2029 (2016) (the Local Plan) and to the Design and Sustainability Supplementary Planning Document (2018) (the SPD), which, amongst other things, seek to ensure that extensions are of a high quality, are subservient and in proportion to the original building, and positively contribute to the appearance of streets. For similar reasons, the proposal would also be contrary to chapter 12 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2019 (the Framework) which seeks to ensure high quality design.

Other matters

14. The Appellant states that were it not for the proposed increase in ridge height, arising from the proposed external insulation, the dormer proposal would comprise permitted development in accordance with The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015 (the GPDO). The Appellant's view is that, having regard to the fallback position of omitting the external insulation and building a nearly identical dormer under permitted development, the main consideration in respect of the appeal proposal should be whether it would have a materially more harmful impact on visual amenity than the potential fallback scheme. The Appellant also argues that the proposed external insulation and new render and cladding, apart from any elements resulting in an increased roof height would also comprise permitted development.
15. Neither of the main parties has drawn my attention to any formal applications for certificates of lawfulness in respect of the appeal property. Furthermore, the determination of what could potentially be built under permitted development rights is not a matter for me to determine in the context of an appeal made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. In this regard, it is open to the Appellant to apply to have this matter determined under section 192 of the Act, and such an application would be unaffected by my determination of this appeal. As it stands, the proposal before me includes the proposed dormer and changes to the external materials, and I have therefore considered the impacts of both upon the character and appearance of the host property and surrounding area.

16. The benefits of improved thermal performance are acknowledged. However, these are not of sufficient magnitude to outweigh my concern with respect to the main issue.
17. Whilst I have given careful consideration to the Appellant's need to extend the appeal property to provide extra space needed for a family home, I am mindful of the advice contained in Planning Practice Guidance¹ that, in general, planning is concerned with land use in the public interest. It is also probable that the proposed development would remain long after the current personal circumstances cease to be material. For these reasons, I therefore find that this factor is not sufficient to outweigh the harm that would be caused contrary to the Local Plan, the SPD and the Framework.
18. My attention has been drawn to the lack of third party objections to the scheme, and support for the proposal from the case officer following the submission of revised drawings during the course of the planning application. Whilst I have noted these matters, they do not affect my decision in respect of this appeal, which I must determine on the basis of the merits of the proposed development before me.

Conclusion

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

S Leonard

INSPECTOR

² Paragraph 008 Reference ID 21b-008-20140306 – 'What is a material planning consideration?'