



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 14 July 2020

by C J Ford BA (Hons) BTP MRTPI

a person appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 04 August 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/Y1110/D/20/3249961

1 Venny Gardens, Venny Bridge, Exeter EX4 8BH

- 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 Bernadette Kavanagh against the decision of Exeter City Council.
 - The application Ref 20/0018/FUL, dated 16 December 2019, was refused by notice dated 17 March 2020.
 - The development proposed is roof alterations including loft conversion with Velux windows. Conversion of existing garage to hall way including new front door arrangement.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The Council does not object to the proposed garage conversion and new front door arrangement. As there is no reason to disagree with that view, the main issue is the effect of the proposed roof alterations on the character and appearance of the pair of dwellings (Nos 1 and 2 Venny Gardens) and the street scene.

Reasons

3. Venny Gardens comprises two pairs of semi-detached houses sited before the closed eastern terminus of Venny Bridge. Unlike the remainder of the street which has built development on both sides, the area opposite Venny Gardens has largely been left open and wild. To the west, the neighbouring property is also set behind a row of trees. Owing to their location and as the separate identifying group name suggests, the four properties have the sense of forming their own small enclave beyond the main part of Venny Bridge, with its own discrete character.
4. The two pairs of properties are built to a common design with the two storey front bays and full hip roofs being distinctive features. The resulting symmetry, both between each attached pair of houses and thereafter between each pair of properties, provides a visually pleasing degree of uniformity. Since their construction, the alterations to the front of the houses have been minimal with No 4 Venny Gardens undertaking a garage conversion and inserting a roof light.

5. The proposed alterations at the appeal property would change the roof shape to a half hip form using matching materials. Three roof lights would be inserted in the front roof slope and four to the rear.
6. Viewed alongside the attached neighbouring house, the additional high-level bulk of the proposal would result in the appeal property having an awkward top heavy and lopsided appearance. In combination with the change to the distinctive roof shape, it would harmfully erode the symmetry with the neighbouring property.
7. Although Venny Bridge as a whole contains a diverse range of house designs, the effect on the street scene should primarily be considered having regard to the discrete character of Venny Gardens. Notwithstanding the set back of the alterations and the partial screening by trees in views from the west, the development would result in the appeal property appearing unbalanced and visually dominant among the group of four properties. As the pleasing degree of uniformity would be significantly undermined, the proposal would fail to successfully integrate with its surroundings.
8. It is appreciated there were no objections from third parties and the proposed roof alterations could normally be carried out as permitted development under the provisions of the General Permitted Development Order 2015. However, the relevant permitted development rights at the property were removed by condition when the Venny Gardens development was approved. As such, the proposal must be duly assessed against extant planning policy which takes into consideration the effect upon the character and appearance of a locality. Furthermore, the lack of objections from neighbours does not lend positive weight to the proposal.
9. While the improved living conditions of an extra bedroom and en-suite that the roof alterations would facilitate are acknowledged, this does not outweigh the resulting harm to the character and appearance of Venny Gardens.
10. Accordingly, owing to the design, in particular the bulk and shape of the proposed roof alterations, it is concluded the development would have an unacceptably harmful effect on the character and appearance of the pair of dwellings and the street scene. The scheme would therefore conflict with Objective 9 and Policy CP17 of the Council's Core Strategy (2012) and Policy DG1 of its Local Plan First Review (2005). These seek to ensure that development proposals promote local character and distinctiveness, an aim that is similarly reflected in paragraph 127 of the National Planning Policy Framework. Part (g) of Policy DG1 specifically seeks to ensure that the volume and shape of proposals relates well to adjoining buildings. The alterations would also conflict with the Council's 'Householder's guide to extension design' Supplementary Planning Document (2008). The guide specifies that extensions should respect the pattern of buildings in the street and match the main roof in terms of shape.

Conclusion

11. For the reasons set out above and having regard to all other matters raised, the appeal is dismissed.

C J Ford APPOINTED PERSON