



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 22 September 2020 by Alex O'Doherty LLB(Hons) MSc MRTPI

Decision by R C Kirby BA (Hons) DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 5 November 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/X0415/D/20/3254896

12 Roberts Lane, Chalfont St. Peter, Gerrards Cross SL9 0QR

- 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 Michael Tobutt against the decision of Buckinghamshire Council.
 - The application Ref PL/20/0524/FA, dated 6 February 2020, was refused by notice dated 6 April 2020.
 - The development proposed is described as, "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 Matters

3. The description of development in the heading above has been taken from the planning application form. However, in Part E of the appeal form it is stated that the description of development has not changed but, nevertheless, a different wording has been entered. The description of development given in the Council's decision notice is: "Loft conversion, new rear first floor dormer window and an additional window to first floor side elevation". This is the description used to determine the application. As that description more accurately describes the proposal, the appeal has also been determined using that description of development.
4. The appeal site is in the Green Belt. Policy GB4 of the Chiltern District Local Plan (including alterations adopted 2001) (consolidated 2007 and 2011) defines this particular area as one where extensions to dwellings are acceptable in principle. Neither party has suggested that this policy is out-of-date, nor that the proposal represents inappropriate development in the Green Belt. As I have no evidence to indicate otherwise, I have proceeded on the basis that the proposal would not comprise inappropriate development in the Green Belt.

Main Issue

5. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the host property and the surrounding area.

Reasons for the Recommendation

6. The appeal property is a 2-storey end of terrace house, with a front gable projection, situated in a rural area. The property has previously been extended to the side and to the rear. I observed that its pitched roof and gable feature to the rear, is replicated on several other nearby properties.
7. The proposal, for a flat-roofed dormer, would project up to the ridge of the host property and would span across virtually the whole rear roof area. It would also have a sizeable depth in comparison with the host property. As such, at this scale, it would be a bulky addition which would appear unduly prominent. Furthermore, its uncompromising rectangular design would fail to harmonise with the host property. Accordingly, despite the use of matching materials, it would not constitute a subordinate addition to the host property. It is acknowledged that there would only be limited glimpses of the new dormer at street level, but it would be seen from the gardens of nearby properties, and this fact would not diminish the harm that the proposal would cause to the host property itself.
8. In the context of the row of terraced dwellings, its large scale and box-like design would appear noticeably incongruent when seen amongst the mostly modest rear gables present on nearby properties. I observed the existing dormer extensions to the rear of properties on Roberts Lane. However, these appeared relatively unobtrusive, whereas the appeal proposal would not. In my view, the presence of these other extensions has not changed the character of the rear aspect to such an extent that the proposal would be in-keeping with the local area. It is recognised that No 11 Roberts Lane has a certificate of lawfulness for the erection of a rear dormer. However, that structure has not yet been built, and as it is unclear whether that development would come forward, this matter has been given limited weight, and it does not outweigh the harm identified.
9. I therefore conclude that the proposal would have an unacceptable and harmful effect on the character and appearance of the host property and the surrounding area. The proposal would conflict with Policies GC1, H13, H15 and H18 of the Chiltern District Local Plan (including alterations adopted 2001) (consolidated 2007 and 2011) which collectively require that development is designed to a high standard, including both the appearance of the development and its relationship to its surroundings.
10. The proposal would also conflict with Policy H6 of the Chalfont St Peter Neighbourhood Plan (2013 – 2028) which requires that development that fails to reinforce the characteristics of its specific Character Area will be resisted, and with Policy CS20 of the Core Strategy (2011) which requires that new development is of a high standard of design which reflects and respects the character of the surrounding area and those features which contribute to local distinctiveness. The proposal would also conflict with the guidance given in the Residential Extensions and Householder Development Supplementary Planning Document (2013) that dormer windows should not dominate the roof, and with paragraph 127 of the National Planning Policy Framework which requires that planning decisions should ensure that developments are sympathetic to local character.

Other Matters

11. No concerns have been raised in relation to the living conditions of neighbouring occupiers, however, this is a neutral matter which does not weigh in favour of the proposal. I acknowledge that the proposal would improve the living accommodation available to the appellant and his family. However, as this would mainly be a private benefit, this has been given limited weight. Overall, I find that the matters advanced in support of the proposal, do not, either individually or collectively, outweigh the harm identified, nor the conflict with the development plan.

Conclusion and Recommendation

12. Based on the above, and having regard to all matters raised, I recommend that the appeal should be dismissed.

Alex O'Doherty

APPEAL PLANNING OFFICER

Inspector's Decision

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

RC Kirby

INSPECTOR