The Planning Inspectorate

Appeal Decision

Site Visit made on 16 November 2020

by Nick Davies BSc(Hons), BTP, MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 02 December 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/D0121/D/20/3256378
4 Wilmots Way, Pill BS20 0JT

- 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 Stephen Kobbe against the decision of North Somerset Council.
- The application Ref 20/P/0711/FUH, dated 19 March 2020, was refused by notice dated 20 May 2020.
- The development proposed is a loft conversion with front facing dormer.

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the impact of the development on the character and appearance of the existing dwelling and the surrounding area.

Reasons

3. 4 Wilmots Way is a modest semi-detached bungalow, unobtrusively located in a quiet cul de sac. It is broadly symmetrical with its attached partner, and they share a simple gabled roof with a central chimney stack. As a result, they form a balanced and visually cohesive pair. On the other side of the road are bungalows, with steeper roofs, and roofspace accommodation served by gable end windows. Most have enlarged this living space through the addition of flat-roofed dormers to the front elevation. The wider area comprises a mixture of bungalows and houses, but there is coherence in their external materials, and traditional pitched roofed form. Many have flat-roofed dormers, but they are set within large roofslopes. Consequently, although the roofscape is regularly punctuated by dormers, it is the traditional sloping roofs that predominate.

4. Policy DM38 of the North Somerset Council Development Management Policies Sites and Policies Plan Part 1 (2016) (the Sites and Policies Plan) addresses proposals to extend existing residential properties. They will be supported provided they respect the massing, scale, proportions and overall design and character of the existing property, and do not harm the street scene. Further guidance is provided in the Council's Residential Design Guide - Section 2: Appearance and Character of house extensions and alterations Supplementary Planning Document (the SPD). Paragraph 3.2.3 advises that large, box-like dormers are normally inappropriate where they would be visible from public views, and that the original roof form should remain the dominant feature in the appearance of the building.

5. The proposed flat-roofed dormer would occupy almost the entire front roofslope of the bungalow, with only a minimal remnant of the original roof remaining around its edges. Consequently, it would become the dominant feature of the building, and would be out of scale with its existing proportions, giving the dwelling a top-heavy appearance. As a result, the simple, unassuming character of the existing bungalow would be lost. The existing front roofslope is clearly visible from the cul de sac above the boundary fence, so the large dormer would be a visually intrusive feature in the street scene. Furthermore, it would upset the existing balanced appearance of the semi-detached pair, which would be harmful to the appearance of the area. The proposal would, therefore, conflict with the requirements of Policy DM38 of the Sites and Policies Plan, and the guidance in the SPD.

6. My attention has been drawn to the presence of other dormers on front roofslopes in the area, particularly those at 3, 5, 7, 9 and 11 Wilmots Way. The evidence indicates that these developments pre-date the adoption of the Sites and Policies Plan and the SPD. In any event, I saw that these dormers occupy larger roofslopes than that of the appeal property. Those at Nos 5, 7, 9 and 11 all retain a considerable expanse of the original sloping roof above the dormer. In these instances, therefore, the original roof form is still apparent in the street scene. In the case of No 3, the dormer has a sloping roof, with matching tiles. These examples, and the others that I saw in the wider area, are relatively successful in preserving the characteristic roofscape, where traditional sloping roofs predominate. They do not, therefore, set a precedent for the appeal scheme, which would result in the loss of practically the entire roofslope.

7. I have also had regard to the terraced houses in Brinsmead Crescent, at the head of the cul de sac. Although they are of a different scale to the surrounding bungalows, they have traditional pitched roofs, covered in tiles that match the surrounding development. The solar arrays that have been fitted lie flush with the roofslopes, so do not alter their general form. Consequently, although these houses are full two-storey buildings, they contribute to the characteristic roofscape of traditional sloping roofs. They do not, therefore, lead me to conclude differently on the harmful impact of the appeal scheme.

8. The appellant suggests that a similar sized dormer could be constructed on the rear elevation as permitted development, but that this would have a greater impact on the privacy of neighbours. No evidence has been submitted to demonstrate that such a fallback position exists, or that it would necessarily be harmful to the living conditions of adjacent residents. I saw, however, that a rear dormer would only be readily visible from the private garage court behind, and in glimpsed views between 85 and 87 Westward Drive. Such a proposal would, therefore, result in less harm to the character and appearance of the area than the appeal proposal, so does not outweigh my findings on the merits of the scheme before me.

9. I therefore conclude that the development would be harmful to the character and appearance of the existing dwelling and the surrounding area. As a result, it would be contrary to Policies DM32 and DM38 of the Sites and Policies Plan, and Policy CS12 of the Council's Core Strategy (2017). Together, these policies seek to achieve high quality design that respects the existing property, and is sensitive to the character of the local area. The proposal would also fail to meet

the government's aim to achieve well-designed places, as set out in Section 12 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

Conclusion

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

Nick Davies

INSPECTOR