
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 2 December 2020

by Penelope Metcalfe BA(Hons) MSc DipUP DipDBE MRTPI IHBC

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 14 December 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/W1905/D/20/3258873

3 The Brambles, Crossbrook Street, Cheshunt, EN8 8JD

- 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 Colin Pereira against the decision of the Council of the Borough of Broxbourne.
 - The application Ref 07/20/0458/HF, dated 9 June 2020, was refused by notice dated 4 August 2020.
 - The development proposed is loft conversion.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main issue

2. I consider that the main issue in this case is its effect on the character and appearance of the host dwelling and the surrounding area.

Reasons

3. The appeal property is a detached bungalow in a small cul-de-sac of three bungalows constructed in the 1980s and accessed from Crossbrook Street via a private road. All have subsequently been extended. Permitted development rights relating to alterations to the roof on the east facing rear elevation were removed on appeal, ref. APP/W1905/19/3242036, dated 10 March 2020.
4. I consider that the relevant policy in this case is DSC2 of the Broxbourne Local Plan 2018-2033 (June 2020) (the local plan). This requires that extensions to buildings should respect the character and design of the building and that their scale, design and external appearance should not unduly impact on the parent building and wider setting.
5. The proposed alterations to the roof include large flat-roofed dormer extensions to both sections of the east facing roof slope. I consider that the size, design and external appearance of these extensions would be out of scale with the existing building. They would be set a small distance from the ridge, eaves and sides of each section of the roof slope. Although this means they would be contained within the roof slope, they would still appear as a disproportionately massive element in comparison to the main bungalow and would be out of keeping with its character and appearance.

6. The extensions would not be readily visible from the public highway. However, the large, vertical, tile hung face of the dormer would be clearly visible in close proximity to the occupiers of neighbouring properties. The existing bungalow is close to its boundary with the rear gardens of Nos. 15 and 17 Downfield Road. These rear gardens are small and I consider that the proposed dormer would have an oppressive and overbearing appearance when viewed both from the rear-facing windows and the gardens of those properties.
7. I conclude that the scale and external appearance of the proposed rear dormers would harm the character and appearance of the host dwelling and the immediate surrounding area, contrary to local plan policy DSC2.

Other matters

8. Neighbouring residents have expressed concerns regarding loss of privacy. This was not raised as main issue in the Council's decision. However, it is clear to me from the previous history of decisions affecting this site that the Council has been consistent in seeking to protect the living conditions of the neighbouring residents. The Inspector, in APP/W1905/19/3242036, supported this approach in concluding that permitted development rights should be removed in respect of the east facing rear elevation.
9. There is a difference in levels between the site and the properties in Downfield Road, such that the latter are higher than the bungalow. This, together with the close spacing between the properties, means that the privacy of all the residents, including the appellant, is somewhat compromised in terms of overlooking. The dormer facing east would have two windows serving ensuite bathrooms and fitted with obscure glazing. In this respect, there would be a limited impact on the privacy of neighbouring residents. However, I consider that the proposed skylights would lead to an increased degree of mutual overlooking and a perception of loss of privacy through an increased awareness of activity, partly because of the difference in levels.
10. I accept that some degree of overlooking and lack of privacy is not unusual in urban areas. However, this does not mean that development which makes existing poor situations worse should be permitted. In this instance, I consider that the proposal would be unacceptable in this respect. This, together with the overall size and bulk of the dormers and the large expanse of vertical tile hanging, which would have an overbearing appearance in close proximity to Nos. 15 and 17 Downfield Road, would result in an adverse impact on residential amenity. This finding adds weight to my conclusion on the main issue.
11. For the reasons given above, the appeal is dismissed.

PAG Metcalfe

INSPECTOR