



Appeal Decision

Site Visit made on 24 May 2021

by Andrew Smith BA (Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 7th June 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/K0235/D/21/3270047

15 Woden Gardens, Great Denham MK40 4GU

- 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 & Mrs Elliott against the decision of Bedford Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 20/02416/FUL, dated 17 October 2020, was refused by notice dated 18 January 2021.
 - The development proposed is described on the application form as: 'single storey rear extension, roof extension with dormers front and rear.'
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. I have used the description of development as stated on the Council's Decision Notice and the appeal form, as opposed to that given on the application form. This is because it correctly references that the single storey extension would extend to the side of the property (as well as to the rear) and that the intended roof extension involves the creation of an additional floor.

Main Issues

3. The main issues are:
 - The effect of the proposed rear dormer upon the character and appearance of the host dwelling and surrounding area; and
 - The effect of the proposal upon the living conditions of on-site residential occupiers, having particular regard to the availability of external amenity space.

Reasons

Character and appearance

4. The appeal property is a detached dwelling. It is located to a part of a modern residential estate where I understand a range of national permitted development rights have been withdrawn, which include rights related to the construction of dormer windows. It was apparent upon inspection that a variety of building forms and external facing materials are present within the estate. Even so, I observed roof forms local to the site to typically be of uncomplicated composition. Where full dormers were present, they tended to be small-sized and consistently spaced across affected roof slopes.

5. The rear dormer that is proposed has been designed with a pitched roof to reflect the form of the host dwelling's roof. It is also the case that external facing materials to match those used to the host property could be secured via condition in the event the appeal be successful. However, notwithstanding the intended stepped in positioning from the roof's edges, the rear dormer would appear as an excessively large and bulky addition.
6. It has been suggested that views of the rear dormer would be limited and that it would not appear prominent within the streetscene. However, during my inspection I undertook a visit to Lindsay Close located to the rear of the site. From there it was apparent that the rear dormer would be readily visible from a range of publicly accessible vantage points upon the Close.
7. My attention has been drawn to a rear roof dormer constructed at No 23 Woden Gardens (No 23). However, that addition is of noticeably narrower width and overall size when compared to the rear dormer under consideration here. It is also apparent that the rear roof slope of No 23 occupies a less prominent position within the estate when compared to the rear roof slope of the appeal property (as intended to be reconstructed and raised in height).
8. As set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (February 2019), planning decisions should not prevent or discourage appropriate innovation or change. However, proposals must also be sympathetic to local character and the surrounding built environment. Whilst the National Design Guide (January 2021) indicates that well-designed places may incorporate built form that adds new character and differences, the rear dormer would not provide a subtle or positive change. It would instead appear as an incongruous and insensitive addition.
9. Planning decisions relating to sites elsewhere appear in the evidence before me. Extensions involving a rear dormer were approved¹ by the Council at Carnoustie Drive, Great Denham in 2017. However, that property does not have a particularly close physical relationship to the appeal site and makes up part of a row of development that backs on to a golf course. Based on these clear differences in site circumstances, it is a decision of limited relevance.
10. A planning permission² for a loft conversion incorporating front and rear dormers at Lady Manor Drive, Bedford has also been brought to my attention. This relates to a different modern estate that is situated some distance from the appeal site. It is also apparent from the approved plans that the rear dormer would address a neighbouring property at close range, which would assist in concealing wider views. Thus, whilst I acknowledge the stated lack of any existing dormers of comparable size at that estate, it is a scheme of limited relevance to the outcome of this appeal.
11. For the above reasons, the proposed rear dormer would cause harm to the character and appearance of the host dwelling and surrounding area. The proposal conflicts with Policies 28S, 29 and 30 of the Bedford Borough Local Plan 2030 (adopted January 2020) (the Local Plan) and with the Residential Extensions, New Dwelling and Small Infill Developments Supplementary Design Guidance (January 2000) (RENDSID), in so far as these policies and guidance

¹ 17/00280/FUL

² 20/02630/FUL

require new development to be of the highest quality design and to contribute positively to the area's character and identity.

Living conditions

12. As set out in RENDSID, in most situations, the total ground floor area of an extended house should be no more than one-third of the size of the plot, with the remaining two-thirds being garden. Nevertheless, as set out in the supporting text to the Design Code for Extensions contained within RENDSID, each scheme will be judged on its own individual circumstances.
13. In this instance, it has been calculated that the proposed development, most particularly the single-storey rear/side extension, would result in 38.95% of the plot being covered in built form. Having considered the submitted plans, I have no reason to consider that this figure is not representative. It is therefore apparent that a minor infringement over and above the one-third RENDSID benchmark standard would occur.
14. Having visited the rear garden of the appeal property and factored in the quality and useability of the garden space intended to be retained, I have no clear reason to consider that poor standards of living for the property's occupiers would result. Indeed, whilst the proposed works would lead to a reduction in depth to part of the rear garden, it is my professional judgement that a private garden area of ample size and functionality to serve the family dwelling in question would be retained. The reconfigured/reduced external space would also suitably reflect the character of the area.
15. For the above reasons, the proposal would not cause harm to the living conditions of on-site residential occupiers, having particular regard to the availability of external amenity space. The proposal accords with Policies 28S, 29 and 30 of the Local Plan and with RENDSID in so far as these policies and guidance require particular attention to be given to the relationship of development with the context in which it is placed and that an extension should maintain adequate amenity space around the original building.

Other Matters

16. I acknowledge that, as far as I am aware, no objection to the scheme has been raised by any nearby residential occupier. However, it remains for me to consider the proposal in the wider public interest.
17. The proposed extensions/additions would provide enhanced living space at the site. However, to my mind, notwithstanding the constraints I understand have been faced by the appellants during the Covid-19 pandemic, it would be possible to deliver not dissimilar upgrades to the property without constructing an incongruent rear dormer. In any event, the benefits to the wider community brought about by the intended improvements to the local housing stock would be limited. Indeed, the scheme's benefits would not outweigh the considerable harm I have identified would be caused by the rear dormer to the character and appearance of the host dwelling and surrounding area. The proposal conflicts with the development plan when read as a whole, and material considerations do not lead me to a decision otherwise.

Conclusion

18. Whilst I have found that acceptable living conditions would result, I have identified that considerable harm would be caused by the rear dormer to the character and appearance of the host dwelling and surrounding area. That harm is the overriding consideration in this case. For the above reasons, the appeal is dismissed.

Andrew Smith

INSPECTOR