



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 21 June 2021

by Mrs H Nicholls FdA MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 13 July 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/D0840/W/21/3272621

8 Maer Down Road, Flexbury, Bude EX23 8NG

- 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 Stratton Developments Limited against the decision of Cornwall Council.
 - The application Ref PA20/05042, dated 19 June 2020, was refused by notice dated 9 October 2020.
 - The development proposed is extension to part of the roof to provide additional residential accommodation for apartment 8, reconfiguration of the layout of the apartment and associated façade alterations.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

3. The appeal building is a recently completed block of flats which, from the evidence, replaced two dormer bungalows. It has been built to provide accommodation over three levels, with the ground level appearing recessed with cantilevered projections of much of the second and third floors towards the road. It has been broken up into sections with the south-eastern 'block' under a flat roof and set at a lower overall roof height to respond to the neighbouring buildings at Nos 5 and 6 Maer Down Road. There are two feature sections of the building under monopitch roof forms which provide visual interest and break up the otherwise flat roof expanse across the remainder of the building. The front elevation has a number of recessed and Juliette balconies. There is also a limited material palette which results in a sleek contrast between white rendered walls with dark detailing on areas including the roof, entrance projection and glazing. Overall, the design and finish are of a high quality and the building assimilates well within the street scene.
4. The surrounding area has a mixed, predominantly residential character. Whilst it is not uncommon for buildings on the eastern side of the road to have up to three storeys of accommodation, albeit with the uppermost levels often set within the roof, buildings on the opposite side are largely detached dwellings, a number of which are single storey or dormer-style bungalows but with an overall limit of up to two storeys in height. There is no precedent for four

storeys of accommodation visible from street level elsewhere specifically within Maer Down Road.

5. The proposal seeks to add a roof extension to the flat roof 'block' of the building to provide additional accommodation for apartment No 8, taking it from a single bed unit to a duplex apartment with three bedrooms. The extension would have a flat roof, its front glazed wall would be set back around 1.6 m from the front building line to provide a recessed balcony and it would be finished in painted render with timber and stone highlights. It is suggested that the overall height of the flat roof addition would be no more than 700 mm more than the height of the highest part of the existing building, which is that of the monopitch roof forms.
6. The roof form of the building as it presently stands is logical and responds well to topography and the immediate context set by buildings on either side. The flat roof 'block' is the widest individual section of the building and is on the lower side of the site, adjacent to buildings with a lower ridge height. The rest of the sections of the building stand a modest amount higher and respond better to the buildings on the higher side of the street.
7. From longer views of the building from Poughill Road, Ocean View Road and Crooklets Road, the overall form and height of the building is appreciable as one which sits well within the context of the surrounding built form. In views from 'Crooklets', the appeal building sits behind an existing row of buildings, but its roof form does not harmfully alter the skyline or disrupt the logical stepping up and down of building heights with the topography.
8. Despite that the proposal is described as a simple 'top hat' and would have a darkened finished so as to appear recessive, it would become the highest and widest 'blocky' element of the building, positioned at the lower end of the road adjacent to lower buildings. Whilst it is suggested that the existing roof form is unfinished and artificially lower, I consider that its height is deliberate and the understated finish is a positive attribute that deflects attention away from the flat roof form.
9. The proposed extension, with recessed glazed front elevation and overhanging elements, would draw attention to the insensitively designed feature, with detriment to its existing character and appearance and would not be a higher quality design than the original as claimed.
10. Though the submitted photomontages indicate that the proposal would not form a prominent feature from Crooklets, this does not suggest that it would be appropriate considered within the context of the immediate streetscene. The photomontage produced to replicate the view from Crooklets Road does however indicate that it would become an illogically tall and blocky flat-roof built element, unsympathetically sited amongst a well-established amalgamation of buildings with largely traditional pitched roof forms. My view is not altered by the existence of a permission for a building nearby with a recessed fourth storey as that sits within a different streetscene within a topographical context that does not strictly apply to the current proposal.
11. In view of the above, the proposal would harm the character and appearance of the area, contrary to Policy 12 of the Cornwall Local Plan (2016) (CLP) which seeks to ensure development is of a high quality, safe, sustainable and inclusive design, of an appropriate scale, density, layout, height and mass with

a clear understanding and response to its setting. For similar reasons, the proposal would run counter to advice in the Cornwall Design Guide (2013) which advises that proposals should be designed to manage the height differences between existing and proposed developments, by relating new development heights to those of the immediate context and surrounding area.

Other Matters

12. I note that the proposal would not necessitate any changes to the access or parking arrangements. I also note that it would avoid adverse effects on neighbouring occupiers in terms of overlooking and loss of light or outlook. The compliance of the scheme with other development plan policies and avoidance of harm does not amount to a benefit of the scheme.

Planning balance and conclusion

13. The benefit of the scheme would be the improvement and enlargement of a single unit that could enable its occupation by a family. This would enable the overall development to achieve a greater mix of housing than the limited range of one to two bed units currently provided, as sought by Policy 6 of the CLP. The reuse of the site to create eight units from the two that have previously existed has increased the efficiency of a brownfield site already, and the proposal to increase the size of one unit would only marginally improve this outcome. The economic benefits from the extended construction phase and increased longer-term economic benefits from a likely increase in the number of residents are also considerations of relevance.
14. However, insofar as the proposal would harm the character and appearance of the area, it conflicts with the development plan when considered as a whole. Neither the benefits or other considerations, including the National Planning Policy Framework or National Design Guide¹, indicate that a decision should be taken other than in accordance therewith.
15. Accordingly, for the reasons outlined above, the appeal is dismissed.

Hollie Nicholls

INSPECTOR

¹ National Design Guide - Planning practice guidance for beautiful, enduring and successful places (2019)