
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 9 November 2021

by Helen O'Connor LLB MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 09 November 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/U3935/D/21/3278790

4 Dunster Close, Swindon SN3 1JS

- 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 Mrs S Bracher against the decision of Swindon Borough Council.
 - The application Ref S/HOU/21/0742/EMMI, dated 29 March 2021, was refused by notice dated 21 June 2021.
 - The development proposed is the extension of existing dormers to front and rear elevations.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matters

2. Following the refusal of the application the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) has been revised and the parties have been given the opportunity to comment on it as part of the appeal process. Therefore, I am satisfied that no one would be prejudiced by my consideration of the appeal having regard to the revised Framework.

Main Issue

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

Reasons

4. Dunster Close is a residential cul-de-sac which comprises mostly of detached dwellings, with some properties providing accommodation in the roof space. Whilst roof forms include hips, projecting gables and modest traditional pitched roof dormer windows, the prevailing roof form is pitched and tiled. This provides an underlying coherence to the appearance of the group of dwellings and assists in reducing the mass of the built form, which is seen against a wooded backdrop from the street. Overall, this results in a pleasant, spacious sub-urban character and appearance to the area.
5. 4 Dunster Close is a detached dwelling that exhibits many of these characteristics. However, in contrast to most residences nearby it has box roof dormers to the front and rear. The front dormer is clearly visible from the street, and views of the rear dormer are possible from the pathway adjacent to the woodland to the west. In both cases, whilst sizeable, they remain a proportionate addition relative to the tiled roof slopes. Their broadly central

placement gives the impression of balanced components in the respective elevations and avoids dominating the overall roof form. As such, although their presence is not in keeping with the surrounding dwellings, they are balanced with other attributes of the dwelling that do correspond. Therefore, the existing dormers at No.4 have a neutral impact, thereby allowing the overall dwelling to positively reinforce the character and appearance of the area.

6. The proposal would continue both dormer windows westwards such that they would feature in approximately $\frac{3}{4}$ of the width of each roof slope. Consequently, views of the tiled roof slopes would be reduced. The cumulative increase in volume would instead add notable bulk in the upper part of the building, which would be exacerbated by the boxy form.
7. Furthermore, the elongation of the dormers to one side would disrupt their broadly central placement and I am not persuaded that the proposed spacing of the three windows in the front dormer would counter this harmful impression. Rather, the development would diminish the balanced proportions of the existing dwelling and give unwarranted emphasis to unsympathetic features. Consequently, the front dormer would be a dominant element of the principal elevation, and the rear dormer would have undue prominence in views from the nearby footpath.
8. Therefore, the proposal would be harmful to the appearance of No.4 and would detract from the wider street scene. On that basis, it would conflict with the advice in the Swindon Residential Extensions and Alterations, Supplementary Planning Document, October 2011 (SPD)¹ which states that unless box dormer windows on a single storey property are a clear feature of the character of the area or have become established as an accepted addition within the townscape, they are not normally considered appropriate.
9. Although the appellant highlights that the proposal would not introduce new dormer windows but would rather extend existing ones, this would not justify disregarding the general design principles that relate to box dormers in the SPD. It is not shown that box dormer windows are a clear feature of the character of the area, and it follows that it would be inappropriate to permit disproportionate box dormers. Therefore, the SPD advice attracts considerable weight against the proposal.
10. In addition, for the reasons outlined, the proposal would fail to add to the overall quality of the area and would not be sympathetic to the local character of the built environment contrary to paragraph 130 of the Framework.
11. The appellant contends that the rear dormer would fall within permitted development rights normally afforded to householders and points to the absence of objections from the Parish Council and the public in relation to the proposed design. Be that as it may, I am required to assess the totality of the proposal before me against local and national planning policies. Therefore, the existence of permitted development rights for elements of the proposal would not outweigh or address the harm I have identified taking the scheme as a whole. Moreover, the absence of objections does not amount to positive support for the proposal. Accordingly, these matters would not lead me to find otherwise.

¹ Paragraph 7.9

12. Therefore, I find that the proposal would be harmful to the host building and wider street scene to the detriment of the character and appearance of the area. Accordingly, it would be contrary to policy DE1 of the Swindon Borough Local Plan 2026, March 2015 which requires a high standard of design for all types of development.

Conclusion

13. Planning law requires that applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise². No compelling reasons have been shown to justify my determining the development other than in accordance with the adopted development plan. Therefore, for the reasons given above, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Helen O'Connor

Inspector

² Section 38(6) Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and section 70(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.