
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 20 December 2021

by P. D. Biggers BSc Hons MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 29 December 2021.

Appeal Ref: APP/J1915/D/21/3284615
32 Hurn Grove, Bishops Stortford CM23 5DD.

- 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 Jenny Bassett against the decision of East Herts Council.
 - The application 3/21/1240/HH, dated 9 May 2021, was refused by notice dated 20 July 2021.
 - The development proposed is hip to gable loft conversion including the addition of a roof dormer to the rear facing roof slope.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the host dwelling and the surroundings on Hurn Grove.

Reasons

3. Hurn Grove, where the appeal site is located, forms part of a modern estate backing onto woodland on the outskirts of Bishops Stortford. The appeal property forms the end house in a short terrace of 4 properties built in brick under a hipped, tiled roof. Within the immediate vicinity there is a mix of gabled-ended roofs and hipped roofs and, in terms of the blocks housing Nos 22-24 and Nos 25-28, gable and hipped roofs are mixed on the same block.
4. For that reason, I am satisfied that the proposal to convert the hip roof to a gable end on the northern end of No 32, even though the other end of the block would remain hipped, would not appear out of keeping with the character and appearance of this part of the estate. The northern end of the terrace backs onto the highway footpath but the immediate surroundings are sufficiently open to ensure the proposed gable would not appear unduly overbearing.
5. However, the same would not be true of the proposed roof dormer. The dormer, although it would be set down slightly from the ridge and up from the eaves and inset from the gable end, would subsume virtually the whole rear roof slope of No 32. As a result, it would appear top heavy and obtrusive in what is a prominent and highly visible roof in the street scene. Moreover, being positioned at one end of the terrace it would also unbalance the roof and appear as an unsightly addition to the roof plane.
6. Policy HOU11 of the *East Herts District Plan* (EHDP) relating to house extensions does state that roof dormers may be acceptable if appropriate to

the design and character of the dwelling and surroundings but that they should be of limited extent and modest proportions and not dominate the roof slope. The design of dormer proposed would not meet these criteria.

7. I have been referred to what the appellant considers is a precedent for the roof dormer within the vicinity where a large full-width dormer is positioned on the rear roof slope of No 17. I am not convinced however that this is a comparable example to the appeal case as the dormer on No 17 is not located on a terrace. The dormer sits on a single dwelling which, although linked at right angles to another house, is not viewed in the context of a terraced block. In any event, more importantly, No 17 serves to demonstrate the detrimental effect a full width dormer can have where it dominates the whole roof slope. I am not persuaded that this would be a design that should be followed elsewhere and therefore I will consider the appeal proposal on its own merits.
8. It has also been put to me that re-siting the solar panels currently on the rear facing roof slope and on the hip onto the top of the proposed dormer would be an improvement in terms of the appearance of the property. However, the extent of visual harm from the dormer would not be mitigated by siting the panels in a less visible location and this would not be a justification for allowing the dormer.
9. I also note the appellant's offer to use alternative facing materials to the front and cheeks of the dormer to that proposed if this would be more acceptable. However, it is the scale, mass and design of the dormer in this position that would be unacceptable and less the materials proposed.
10. The *National Planning Policy Framework* (the Framework) at paragraph 130 requires that developments must be sympathetic to local character to create high quality buildings and spaces amongst other things and in these respects the proposal fails. Policy DES4 of the EHDP, is consistent with the Framework in requiring development to be to a high standard of locally distinctive design and to respect or improve upon the character of the site and surroundings in terms of scale, height, massing and design amongst other things. EHDP Policy HOU11 is also consistent with the Framework and seeks to ensure the design of extensions meets similar criteria. For the above reasons i.e. principally the scale, mass, bulk and design of the rear dormer the proposal would be disproportionate to the roof slope of No 32 and have an unacceptable impact on the established character and appearance of the terrace and the surroundings on Hurn Grove.
11. Given that I have concluded that the hip to gable extension itself would be acceptable I have considered whether a split decision could be made, i.e. allowing that element but dismissing the roof dormer. However, such a decision is only possible where the elements are physically and functionally separate and, in this case, the two elements of the proposal are not capable of being separated.

Other Matters

12. I understand the appellant's wish to provide additional high quality family accommodation and avoid the need to move house. In that way sustainable and effective use of housing land would be achieved, an objective which is encouraged by the Framework in Section 11. However, paragraph 124 in the same section of the Framework states that this should not be at the expense of maintaining an area's prevailing character and setting. As such, and for

the reasons above, sustainable and effective use of the dwelling would not outweigh the harm to the character and appearance of the terrace and Hurn Grove that would be the result of the proposal.

13. I note the appellant's reference to a court order requiring appropriate accommodation for the family's children. However, having carefully considered the proposed design I am not persuaded that the appellant's objective of securing an additional bedroom and rear facing, ensuite bathroom within the loft space could not have been achieved in a different way avoiding the need for an oversized dormer albeit necessitating a reduction in the size of the bedroom.

Conclusion

14. In reaching my decision I have had regard to the matters before me but for the reasons above the appeal should be dismissed.

P. D. Biggers

INSPECTOR