The Planning Inspectorate

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 5 January 2022

by N Praine BSc (Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 18 JANUARY 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/C1435/D/21/3278168
75 Gorringe Valley Road, Lower Willingdon BN20 9SR

- 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 L Forbes-Cooper against the decision of Wealden District Council.
- The application Ref WD/2020/2493/F, dated 1 December 2020, was refused by notice dated 26 April 2021.
- The development proposed is for a hip to gable, front dormers, rear roof extension and ground floor rear extension.

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 area.

Reasons

3. This part of Gorringe Valley Road is a primarily residential area broadly characterised by detached and semi-detached single storey dwellings, some of which have accommodation in the roof space. The appeal property, one half of a semi-detached pair of bungalows, fronts onto Gorringe Valley Road with a vehicular and pedestrian access running parallel to its side boundary which gives access to Willingdon Cemetery located to the rear of the appeal site.

4. A number of neighbouring properties have dormer windows to the rear and these are of varying sizes, designs and levels of separation from public viewpoints. Given its proximity, the existing rear roof plane of the appeal property is particularly prominent from the access road to the cemetery as well as from within the cemetery itself.

5. The Wealden Design Guide (WDG) explains that dormer windows should not dominate the roofscape, should be smaller than windows on the same elevation and kept low on the roof, well below the ridge line[1]. The rear dormer as proposed would extend across much of the width and height of the existing roof plane and would have a flat roof. It would occupy a substantial portion of the roof by reason of its size, prominent location and design appearing dominant and at odds with the host dwelling and surrounding area.

[1] Chapter 5, Part 10, Para 10.6

6. While my attention was drawn to other large rear dormers in the immediate area, they are generally less prominent or smaller than the appeal proposal. In some instances where the dormers are large, those dormer windows are to properties with less spacing between properties than is evident in this appeal. Accordingly, the proposed development would be visually discordant with the existing character and appearance of the area.

7. The appellant suggests a similar rear dormer window could be erected under permitted development rights. However, I have not been provided with any evidence that this would be likely to take place. Consequently, I am unconvinced that this represents a realistic fallback position.

8. The proposed development would be harmful to the character and appearance of the area. Accordingly, I find conflict with Policies HG10 and EN27 of the Wealden Local Plan (1998), Policies SPO13 and WCS14 of the Core Strategy Local Plan (2013), guidance set out in the Wealden Design Guide (2008) and chapter 12 of the Framework all of which seek to ensure high quality design which does not harm the character or appearance of the locality.

Conclusion

9. For the above reasons, having regard to the development plan as a whole, the approach in the Framework and all other relevant considerations, the appeal is dismissed.

N Praine

INSPECTOR