



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 27 September 2022

by Chris Couper BA (Hons) Dip TP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 07 October 2022.

Appeal Ref: APP/C1950/D/22/3302251

36 Oaklands Avenue, Brookmans Park, Hertfordshire AL9 7UJ

- 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 and Mrs Cox against the decision of Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 6/2022/0810/HOUSE, dated 1 April 2022, was refused by notice dated 26 May 2022.
 - The development proposed is described as roof alterations hip to gable; loft conversion with rear dormer window, and 3 roof lights to the front 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 property and the area.

Reasons

3. Paragraph 5.2 of the Welwyn Hatfield Supplementary Design Guidance 2005 ('SDG') sets out, amongst other things, that dormer windows should appear subservient to the roof of the host property and in proportion to its fenestration. It continues that their cheeks should be set in at least one metre from the flank, or party wall.
4. No 36 forms one half of a semi detached two storey pair, at the end of a row of similar properties in Oaklands Avenue. Notwithstanding some hip to gable extensions, given their fairly consistent style, architectural detailing, and siting, these pairs appear as a cohesive group in the streetscene. To the rear, many have undergone more significant alterations, with ground floor extensions particularly evident, along with occasional dormer windows, although pitched main roofs still dominate.
5. The proposed front roof lights would be modest and unobtrusive; and the proposed hip to gable extension would not appear out of place. The Council does not object to those elements of the scheme, and for similar reasons neither do I.
6. Although it would be set up from the eaves, the proposed rear dormer would be set only very slightly down from the host's ridge, and its cheeks would

- extend almost to the party wall on one side and to the proposed gable on the other. As a result, it would have a very considerable scale and rectilinear bulk, which would entirely dominate the host's sloping roof, and would give the resultant property a very top heavy appearance.
7. That impact would be exacerbated by the proposed glazing behind the balcony which would be significantly larger, and out of proportion, compared to the windows in the floor beneath. In these regards, notwithstanding the use of matching materials, the scheme would conflict with the advice in the SDG.
 8. The appellants have drawn my attention to other rear dormers in the area, some of which I saw on my visit, and photographs of which are included at Appendix A of their statement. Some of those are on the other side of the road and would not be viewed together with this scheme, but I observed a similar dormer to that proposed here at No 40.
 9. I do not have the full planning history of those schemes, so cannot be sure of the adopted planning policies and guidance in place at the time they were built. However, the scattering of similar dormers in the area does not justify the harm that would be caused by this one to this property, and they are not representative of the area's prevailing character.
 10. For the above reasons, the proposed rear dormer would harm the character and appearance of the host property and the area. Whilst it would be barely visible, if at all, in the streetscene, the harm that it would cause would be apparent from nearby dwellings, and their rear gardens.
 11. The fairly recently published National Planning Policy Framework 2021 sets out the fundamental importance of high quality and beautiful buildings; that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development; and that development should be visually attractive and add to the overall quality of an area.
 12. Policies D1 and D2 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005 also require high quality design, which respects or enhances local distinctiveness and character, and which incorporates the principles in the SDG. For the reasons above, this proposed dormer does not represent good design, and it would thus conflict with those policies, and with that advice.
 13. The scheme would conflict with the development plan and, having regard to all other matters raised, the appeal is therefore dismissed.

Chris Couper

INSPECTOR