



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 18 October 2022

by S Harrington MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 02 November 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/K1128/D/22/3303936

3 Ashwood Close, Loddiswell, Devon TQ7 4RG

- 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 & Mrs R Webber against the decision of South Hams District Council.
 - The application Ref 0484/22/HHO, dated 07 February 2022, was refused by notice dated 20 May 2022.
 - The development proposed is alterations to existing property.
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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 area.

Reasons

3. The appeal property is a residential semi-detached bungalow with an existing loft room, located in a residential area consisting of a mix of single storey and two storey buildings and within the South Devon Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The immediately surrounding properties form a tight cluster of buildings, and although the appeal property features 'velux' style roof lights, and a neighbouring property features roof mounted solar panels, these do not interrupt the uniform flow of pitched roofs within the existing roofscape which form an important component of the character and appearance of the immediate area.
4. The proposed development seeks to replace the two existing rooflights with a dormer window to the front elevation of the property in order to provide additional headroom within the existing 'loft' room. The design of the proposed dormer window would feature a flat roof, with glazed side cheeks.
5. The Plymouth and South West Devon Supplementary Planning Document (2020) (SPD) as referred to in the Council's officer report provides a series of principles to be applied to the assessment of new dormer windows. The overarching aim of this guidance is to ensure that dormer windows do not dominate the original building and respect the proportions and features of the host property and context of the street scene.
6. The scale and position of the dormer within the roof would result in a significant amount of the existing roof plane remaining and would not dominate

the host building. However, I observed on my site visit that flat roof dormer windows as that proposed are not a feature of properties within the area, which is characterised by largely uninterrupted pitch roofs.

7. There are other dormer windows in the wider area which I also observed, although these examples, significantly and importantly, differ in design being of smaller scale under pitch roofs, thereby maintaining the consistent character of the wider roofscape of the area. Furthermore, whilst only glimpse views of the appeal property are available from Ashwood Park, the property is clearly visible from Ashwood Close and the nearby footpath, where the property is seen in the context of the tightly grouped cluster of properties. The introduction of a flat roof dormer extension in this location, whilst not dominating the host building, would be an apparent and incongruous addition in the surrounding street scene given the prevalence of surrounding pitch roofs, thereby harming the character and appearance of the area and conflicting with the guidance of the SPD
8. I am required to give great weight to conserving and enhancing the landscape and scenic beauty of the AONB. The Council's AONB Management Plan 2019 - 2024 (MP) states that the AONB landscape features include rugged cliffs, sandy coves, peaceful countryside, picturesque villages and rolling hills. The MP also identifies ten special qualities which include deeply rural rolling patchwork agricultural landscape, iconic wide, unspoilt and expansive panoramic views and a deeply incised landscape that is intimate, hidden and secretive away from the plateau tops.
9. Whilst I have identified that the proposed development would affect the character of the existing roof scape of the area, the appeal property is located near the centre of an urban area and is read in the context of a developed settlement. Consequently, mindful of the special qualities of the AONB and given the proposed development's small scale, association with an existing building and location within an urban area surrounded by existing built form, I find the proposed development would not have any detrimental effect on the special qualities and character of the AONB thereby maintaining the AONB's landscape and scenic beauty.
10. Although the proposal would not conflict with the aims of Policy DEV25 of the Plymouth and South West Devon Joint Local Plan 2014-2034 (LP), and the provisions of the Framework which, amongst other things, seek to conserve and enhance the landscape and scenic beauty of the AONB, I have found that due to appearing incongruous within the street scene, the proposal would harm the character and appearance of the immediate area. It would therefore conflict with LP policies DEV20 and DEV23 which seek, amongst other things, to ensure that development achieves good standards of architectural design which contributes positively to the townscape and protect and improve the quality of the built environment. The proposal would also be inconsistent with the provisions of the Framework in relation to achieving well-designed places which are visually attractive.

Other Matters

11. Given that there are existing roof lights that overlook the path that leads to properties in Ashwood Close, any additional benefits of the dormer window to natural surveillance are somewhat reduced.

12. It has been put to me that the proposal could be considered 'permitted development' if it were not within an AONB and solar panels could also be mounted on the roof as permitted development. Even if this were so, the appeal site is in any case within the AONB, and I have therefore assessed the appeal development as proposed on its individual merits. Installing solar panels is not the development before me.

Conclusion

13. Whilst I have found that there would be no harm to the special character of the AONB, such a lack of harm would be neutral in the planning balance. Therefore, for the reasons given above, I find that the proposal would conflict with the development plan, read as a whole. No material considerations have been shown to have sufficient weight to indicate that a decision should be taken otherwise than in accordance with it. Therefore, the appeal is dismissed.

S Harrington

INSPECTOR