



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 29 August 2023

by M Clowes BA (Hons) MCD PG CERT (Arch Con) MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 8 September 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/H1033/D/23/3321304

150 Buxton Road, Whaley Bridge, Derbyshire SK23 7JF

- 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 Knowles against the decision of High Peak Borough Council.
 - The application Ref HPK/2022/0561, dated 22 December 2022, was refused by notice dated 8 March 2023.
 - The development proposed is single storey rear extension, front & rear dormer.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matter and Main Issue

2. The Council advises that it has no objection to the proposed rear dormer and single storey rear extension. Based on all that I have seen and read, I have no reason to disagree. Hence, the main issue of this appeal is the effect of the proposed front dormer on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

3. The appeal site comprises a 2-storey semi-detached dwelling in an elevated position. The surrounding development consists of differing residential styles, ages and forms with varying separation distances between them. This arrangement, combined with the maturely planted frontages contributes positively to the spacious and pleasant character of the street scene.
4. The Residential Design Supplementary Planning Document 2005 (SPD) advises that dormer windows are generally rare in High Peak, will often be unacceptable on the front elevation of houses, and should be positioned to the rear of dwellings where they cannot be seen clearly.
5. The proposed dormer window would extend across almost the full width of the main front roof slope of the appeal site. Although set back from the eaves, the proposed box form, width and position high up at the top of the roof, would result in a top-heavy and dominant feature. The flat roof form would be at odds with that of the appeal property and the general uniformity of pitched roofscapes within the street scene. In this regard, it would not harmonise with the parent building as required by the High Peak Design Guide (2018). The minimal set down from the ridge of the roof would not be perceptible from the street scene due to the elevated position. Nor would it be seen as a smaller part of an extended roof form, given that the 2-storey side extension is deeply recessed from the main front roof slope. Instead, the development due to its form and scale would appear as an incongruous addition drawing the eye to a negative degree, that the use of matching materials and balance of solid to void elements would not mitigate.

6. Whilst not a terrace, the host dwelling is part of a pair of semi-detached properties that share a consistent roof plane. The dormer window would unbalance the largely retained symmetrical appearance of the semi's, particularly at roof level. Having a different context to the proposal, the dormer window to No 148 Buxton Road is to the rear and only partially visible.
7. The boundary wall and raised bank to the front of the appeal site would be insufficient to prevent the proposed dormer from being readily seen in southward views along Buxton Road, including those afforded to pedestrians and residents accessing the garages opposite. Planting including evergreen species would offer screening in views to the north. However, the planting is primarily located on third party land such that its retention cannot be ensured.
8. Roofscapes along Buxton Road are predominantly plain and uninterrupted. Where dormers are present, they are infrequent, belonging to detached dwellings and of a dual pitched roof construction, forming a subservient element of the overall roof¹. As such they differ from the proposal before me. A box dormer has been added without planning permission to 132 Buxton Road, a semi-detached property to the north of the appeal site. This dormer window has a horizontal emphasis contrasting with the vertical proportions of the host dwelling, and thus appears as an incongruous addition unbalancing the pair of semi-detached dwellings. The presence of unsympathetic development does not justify further harm, even in an area that is mixed in character.
9. The proposed front dormer window would have an adverse effect on the character and appearance of the area. It would therefore conflict with Policies S1 and EQ6 of the High Peak Local Plan 2016 (HPLP) which seek to ensure that development contributes positively to an area's character and identity, in terms of amongst other things, scale and appearance, objectives shared with the Design Guide and SPD. Conflict is also found with paragraph 130 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) which requires developments to be of a high-quality design and sympathetic to local character.

Other Matters

10. Suggestion is made that paragraph 14 of the Framework and Policy S1a of the HPLP indicate that presumption should be made in favour of the development. Paragraph 14 relates to housing proposals and neighbourhood plans, neither of which are applicable here. Regardless, the Framework is clear that the presumption in favour of sustainable development, does not change the statutory status of the development plan as the starting point for decision making. Where a proposal conflicts with an up-to-date development plan, permission should not usually be granted unless material considerations indicate that the plan should not be followed. Whilst there may be support for residential extensions within the HPLP and SPD, such support is not without qualification. The proposal conflicts with development plan policy in respect of scale, form and position.

Conclusion

11. For the reasons given above, having considered the development plan as a whole, and all other considerations, the appeal is dismissed.

M Clowes - INSPECTOR

¹ As observed at 156, 158, 168 and 170 Buxton Road.