



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 30 August 2023

by P J Staddon BSc, Dip, MBA (Distinction), MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 14 September 2023.

Appeal Ref: APP/Q3115/D/23/3323683

12 Elm Close, Wheatley, Oxfordshire OX33 1UW

- 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 S Halstead against the decision of South Oxfordshire District Council.
 - The application Ref P22/S4234/HH, dated 22 November 2022, was refused by notice dated 23 March 2023.
 - The development proposed is 'removal of existing roof with new raised roof and rear dormer and front porch.'
-

Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for the 'removal of existing roof with new raised roof and rear dormer and front porch' at 12 Elm Close, Wheatley, Oxfordshire OX33 1UW, in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref P22/S4234/HH, dated 22 November 2022, and the plans submitted with it, subject to the following conditions:
 - 1) The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than 3 years from the date of this decision.
 - 2) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: LOC 001; BLO 001; and 22/2242/1A.
 - 3) No works above ground level shall be carried out until details of all external facing materials for the development have been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The relevant works shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

Procedural matter

2. In the course of the appeal, the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) was updated, with a new version issued in September 2023. As the changes in the new version have no bearing on the main issue in this case, it was not necessary for me to consult the parties.

Main issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area, with particular regard to its raised roof ridge height.

Reasons

4. Elm Close is a cul-de-sac of 13 single storey detached bungalows in the south-east of the village of Wheatley. The close has a low-rise suburban character and the bungalows are typically set back from the road, behind parking areas and front gardens, giving an open and spacious feel. Whilst all of the dwellings are single storey, there is a variety of bungalow designs, roof forms and a mix of facing materials. In the surrounding area there is a mix of dwelling types, which include 2 storey houses and bungalows with accommodation in their roof spaces. I observed that, from the end of Elm Close, dormer roof extensions to bungalows in Hillary Way (to the north-east) are visible.
5. The appeal property (No 12) is to the south of the turning head, and sits a little further back on its plot than its neighbour No 10, which has an attached garage adjacent to the appeal site boundary. No 12 is brick built with a simple pitched tiled roof which has a ridgeline that is a little lower than that of No 10, but of a similar height that of No 14 at the head of the cul-de-sac.
6. The appeal proposal would replace the existing roof with a higher structure, comprising pitched roof planes at the front and back, with a limited central flat roof section. This would create a bedroom and storage space at first floor level. The front pitched roof plane would include 5 rooflights and the rear plane would include a dormer structure and 4 rooflights. A front porch is also included.
7. South Oxfordshire District Council's (the Council) single refusal reason is based on its concern that the raised ridge height would be out of keeping and harmful to the visual amenity of the streetscene.
8. However, I observed that there is a variation in roof forms and heights along the close and, specifically, the existing ridgeline of No 12 is notably lower than its closest neighbour No 10 and there is a spacious gap between the appeal property and the lower ridgeline of No 14. The proposed increase in roof height is quite modest, the Council's officer report stating that it would be 'around 1 metre'. Moreover, the appeal property, being set further back on its plot than its neighbours, is less prominent in the streetscene. Whilst the resulting roof form would be a little higher than the adjacent bungalows, and of a different design, it would not be incongruent or jar in the streetscene.
9. I therefore find no conflict with policies DES1 and DES2 of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011–2035 (adopted December 2020) which seek high quality development that reflects local character and context.
10. I have noted the Council's reference to point 5.52 of the South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse Joint Design Guide (2022) concerning dormer roof extensions. However, that guidance does not preclude re-modelling of an existing roof form and, in this case, the dormer element would follow the guidance in terms of being above the eaves line, below the ridge line, and set in from the gable ends.

Other matters

11. I have noted third party representations made at the application stage regarding concerns about impacts on living conditions for occupants of a neighbouring property. I share the Council's assessment that the proposal would not result in any unacceptable loss of amenity to the neighbouring property.

Conditions

12. Having regard to the Framework, and in particular paragraphs 55 and 56, I have considered the need for planning conditions. In addition to the standard time limit condition, I have specified the approved plans as this provides certainty. I have also imposed a condition requiring the approval of external facing materials, in the interests of ensuring a high standard of appearance and in terms of certainty, as precise materials are not specified in the application plans and documentation.

Conclusion

13. For the reasons stated above, the appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted subject to the conditions set out in paragraph 1 of this decision.

P. Staddon

INSPECTOR