



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 19 September 2023

by E Dade BA (Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 29 September 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/K0425/D/23/3315299

Westwood, Wycombe Road, Studley Green, Buckinghamshire HP14 3UY

- 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 Gordon Ross against the decision of Buckinghamshire Council.
 - The application Ref 22/07960/FUL, dated 2 November 2022, was refused by notice dated 15 December 2022.
 - The development proposed is loft conversion and addition of dormers.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for loft conversion and addition of dormers at Westwood, Wycombe Road, Studley Green, Buckinghamshire HP14 3UY in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref 22/07960/FUL, dated 2 November 2022, 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: 1766_BAL_01 B Location and Block Plans; 1766_BAL_02_02 Existing Survey Plans; 1766_BAL_03 Existing Survey Elevations; 1766_BAL_04_06 A Proposed Plans; 1766_BAL_05 B Proposed Elevations.
 - 3) Prior to the occupation of the development hereby permitted one bird box shall be attached to the house or trees within the site, in positions suitable for their intended purpose, and thereafter retained for the lifetime of the development.

Preliminary Matters

2. The site is located in the Green Belt. Paragraph 149 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) states that the construction of new buildings in the Green Belt is inappropriate subject to certain exceptions. The Council's assessment concluded that the proposal would fall within one of those exceptions: the extension or alteration of a building that does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building. On this basis, the proposal would not be inappropriate development and therefore would not harm Green Belt openness. From everything I have seen in submissions and on my site visit, I have no reason to disagree.
3. The proposal is similar to a previously approved scheme to provide pitched roof dormers at the front and rear of the appeal property, along with other internal and external alterations¹. The proposal differs from the approved scheme

¹ LPA ref: 22/06143/FUL

insofar as it proposes an additional dormer at the side of the building at the west elevation. My reasoning therefore focusses principally on the effects of the proposed side dormer.

Main Issue

4. The main issue in this appeal is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the appeal property and area.

Reasons

5. The appeal property is a modern, detached bungalow with a hipped roof, projecting front gable and a flat-roofed side projection providing a utility room and double garage. A tall, external chimney adjoins the side elevation which extends from ground level to the height of the roof ridge.
6. Through the addition of the proposed side-facing dormer, the proposal would alter the appeal property's roof line. However, from the front, the proposed side-facing dormer would appear to occupy space between the chimney and roof plane and would thus be contained within the built form of the existing building, reducing its visual prominence.
7. The existing ground floor side projection gives the dwelling a wide frontage, and the dwelling's front gable and chimney are visually prominent. Against such features, the proposed side-facing dormer would not appear dominant, and the proposal would appear subordinate in scale to the appeal property.
8. The appeal property is located within the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The Chilterns Buildings Design Guide states that dormer windows should be small, kept low on the roof, and designed to let in light rather than create additional space. However, the appeal property is of modern appearance and is not in keeping with traditional design of vernacular buildings within the AONB.
9. Moreover, whilst the side-facing dormer would provide additional living space in the loft, it would be located symmetrically on the roof, below the ridgeline and set in from the eaves and roof edge and would be constructed from materials matching the appeal property. The side-facing dormer would be identical to the previously approved rear dormer and similar in scale to proposed front dormer. The side-facing dormer would therefore satisfy the design criteria set out in the Householder Planning and Design Guidance Supplementary Planning Document 2020, and as such would be of a scale and form appropriate in the context of the existing bungalow and thus would not appear visually overbearing.
10. No dwellings in the surrounding area appear to have a side-facing dormer. However, dwellings along this section of Wycombe Road differ in design and appearance from one another and there are examples of pitched roof dormers on several dwellings within the immediate area. From the front of the appeal property, the bulk and mass of the proposed side dormer would be visible. However, the appeal property is positioned close to the neighbouring two-storey dwelling, and therefore the scale of the proposed development would not appear incongruous within this context.
11. The appeal property is within a row of dwellings fronting onto Wycombe Road, a straight A-road with a 40mph speed limit, pedestrian footway, streetlighting columns and signage, and is within the built area of the village.

12. The appeal property is set back from the highway by a deep driveway and a grass verge with trees with dense foliage which partially obscure the appeal property from view from the street. Pedestrian footfall along the street appears low, and therefore views of the proposed side dormer would generally be experienced as fleeting glimpses from passing vehicles. Therefore, whilst the proposed dormer would be visible from the public highway, it would not appear dominant within the street scene.
13. From the appeal site the experience of the AONB is that of distant views of the rural landscape. The appeal site's immediate context is generally suburban and modern in character. The proposed development would have no effect on views of the AONB landscape, and therefore would not adversely affect the landscape and scenic beauty of the AONB.
14. For the reasons set out above, the proposal would not harm the character and appearance of the appeal property or area. The proposal would therefore comply with Policies DM35 and DM36 of the Wycombe District Local Plan 2019 (LP) which together require development proposals to demonstrate a positive response to the built context, respect the character and appearance of the existing property, and be subservient in scale to the existing dwelling. The proposal would also accord with LP Policy DM30 which requires proposals to conserve the natural beauty of the Chilterns AONB.
15. In addition, the proposal would satisfy paragraph 130 of the Framework which requires proposals be sympathetic to local character.

Conditions

16. In addition to the standard time limit of the planning permission granted, in the interests of certainty I have attached a condition specifying the approved plans.
17. LP Policy DM34 requires development deliver long lasting measurable net gains in biodiversity. To achieve this, I have attached the Council's suggested condition which requires one bird box be provided within the site.

Conclusion

18. For the reasons given above, having regard to the development plan taken as a whole, and all other relevant material considerations, I conclude the appeal should be allowed.

E Dade

INSPECTOR