



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 4 October 2023

by N Perrins BSc (hons), MSc, MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 07 November 2023.

Appeal Ref: APP/T1410/D/23/3323919

48 Rockhurst Drive, Eastbourne BN20 8UX

- 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 McDowell against the decision of Eastbourne Borough Council.
 - The application Ref: 230191, dated 1 March 2023, was refused by notice dated 9 May 2023.
 - The development proposed is for a loft conversion with raised ridge and rear dormer.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the dwelling and surrounding area.

Reasons

3. The appeal site is a two storey end of terrace property located on a corner plot in Rockhurst Drive. The appeal property has a slightly lower ridge height and further forward position than the rest of the terrace of dwellings to which it is attached. There is a mature tree within the side garden that blocks some views of the appeal site from Rockhurst Drive. The character of the area is residential comprising terraces of dwellings and blocks of flats of generally uniform design.
4. The appeal scheme proposes to raise the ridge height and construct a rear dormer across the width of the rear roof elevation of the property. The appellant has provided examples of a number of similar proposals that have been erected in the surrounding area. I do not have all the specific information before me in respect of these examples, but they do help to demonstrate there is some variation in roof form within the locality.
5. In this case, the existing dwelling is on a prominent corner plot and is designed to be a complimentary and slightly subservient feature at the end of the terrace of dwellings, in terms of its height, scale and roof form. A particularly notable feature of the property as existing is its symmetrical gable end, which is clearly visible from the street and is seen in the context of nearby blocks of flats which have similar features. The appeal proposal would lose this symmetry at the end of the terrace by raising the ridge height, which would then create an incongruous and unbalanced appearance when viewed from Rockhurst Drive. Whilst I appreciate that this is proposed in order to provide

consistent ceiling heights throughout the property and to comply with building regulations, this loss of symmetry at the end of the terrace would have an adverse impact on the appearance of appeal property and result in harm to the character of the area.

6. I have reviewed the examples provided by the appellant of other gable ended properties nearby where dormers have been constructed that have substantially altered the shape and design of the roof. However, these examples are the exception to what is mainly a uniform roofscape character; I therefore do not consider these examples provide sufficient justification to allow the appeal proposal before me given the harm that I have identified.
7. I also acknowledge that full width dormers are not uncommon in this area, but when considered together with the proposed change to the gable end, the development as a whole would appear as an overly bulky, distorted and top heavy extension and which would appear out of proportion in relation to the first floor windows. The result would be harmful to both the appearance of the property, and, given its prominent position in the street, the wider character of the area.
8. I acknowledge the appellant's point that the appeal property is only visible from the front, back and side of the property and within a context of other built development, which includes blocks of flats that are more dominant features when compared with the appeal proposal. I have also considered the effect of the mature tree in the side garden area that will provide some screening throughout the year from certain vantage points. Even so, the appeal site is a prominent corner plot, and whilst views are largely contained to the immediate surrounds, it is still necessary to ensure that the proposal can assimilate successfully with the existing dwelling and the character of the area. For the reasons set out, I find that it would not, and the appeal proposal would result in an unbalanced and top heavy looking end of terrace property when compared with the symmetrical and complimentary form of development that exists today.
9. I note the appellant has highlighted that the proposal is not dissimilar to what could be achieved through permitted development. However, permitted development rights would not cover the proposed increase in overall roof height. To fall within permitted development rights, a different scheme would therefore be required, which would not be the same in terms of visual impact, and may not be acceptable to the appellant. I therefore can only give this very limited weight and it does not outweigh the harm I have identified to the character and appearance of the dwelling and surrounding area.
10. In summary and for the reasons set out, the appeal proposal would create a bulky and top heavy addition and loss of symmetry to this end of terrace dwelling, which would harm the character and appearance of the dwelling and surrounding area. I conclude, therefore, that the appeal scheme does not comply with Policy D10a of the Eastbourne Core Strategy Local Plan (2013) and saved Policies UHT1 and UHT4 of the Eastbourne Borough Local Plan 2001-2011 (2007), which amongst other things require development to make a positive contribution to the appearance of the area, ensure development is sympathetic to its setting in terms of scale, height and massing and not have an unacceptable impact on visual amenity. The appeal proposal would also not

be consistent with paragraph 130 of the National Planning Policy Framework, which seeks to ensure that developments are sympathetic to local character.

Conclusion

11. For the reasons given above, the proposal is not consistent with the policies of the development plan as a whole, due to its impact on the appearance of the appeal property and the character of the area, and there are no material considerations that would lead me to a different conclusion. I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

N Perrins

INSPECTOR