



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 10 October 2023

by K Jones BA (Hons) DipLA CMLI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 9th November 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/U1105/D/23/3325341

42 Springfield Road, Exmouth, Devon EX8 3JY

- 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 Tim Prince against the decision of East Devon District Council.
 - The application Ref 23/0665/FUL, dated 27 March 2023, was refused by notice dated 30 May 2023.
 - The development proposed is conversion of roof space to habitable use to include front flat roof dormer and single storey rear extension with roof terrace.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The appeal proposals include a number of alterations which are not part of the Council's reason for refusal, nor does the Council identify any conflict with the development plan in relation to these aspects of the application. Following my site visit I see no reason to disagree. Therefore the focus of this appeal is the proposed first-floor dormer on the front elevation of the property.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of both the host dwelling and the surrounding area.

Reasons

4. Springfield Road is a residential street located within the urban area of Exmouth. It is made up of a mix of detached and semi-detached bungalows which are oriented to run parallel with the road. As a result of their low-set profile, the roofs of the bungalows are an important and visually prominent part of the street scene. Whilst not designated as a heritage asset in its own right or part of a wider area, 42 Springfield Road currently makes a consistent contribution to this character.
5. Several of the bungalows on Springfield Road have some form of roof alteration, typically in the form of one or more front flat-roofed dormers. Whilst the differing roof alterations has introduced some variety into the street scene, there remains consistency in the positioning of these dormers back from the front eaves of the roofs. This effect maintains subservience of the dormers, and maintains the visible and characteristic roofline.

6. The proposed dormer would cover a substantial proportion of the existing front roof, extending forwards almost to the edge of the eaves, and obscuring all but a very thin front edge of the roof. Whilst the overall height of the proposals may be consistent with the previously approved dormer, by bringing the front elevation forward and down to meet the eaves, the visible height and massing of the dormer would be markedly increased. This additional mass at roof level would result in a bulky and top-heavy appearance to the property when viewed from the road, and would not reflect the proportions of the existing dwelling or neighbouring properties.
7. Although the change from the approved dormer to that now proposed would be relatively modest, the increased visible height of the front elevation and the altered relationship to the eaves would be a clearly discernible departure from the prevailing character of the existing dwelling and the street scene.
8. The appellant has drawn my attention to examples of large dormers both in Springfield Road and nearby Bapton Close, and I acknowledge that some of these features do occupy a large proportion of the dwellings' roofs. However, the examples provided are set sufficiently back from the eaves to maintain the visible form of the roof, and do not obscure the original form of the bungalows.
9. Although there is no explicit requirement for 'subservience' of a scheme in the development plan, within Policy D1 of the East Devon Local Plan (the Local Plan) there is an expectation that development is locally distinctive, respects the key characteristics of the area, and relates well to its context. Policy EB2 of the Exmouth Neighbourhood Plan (the Neighbourhood Plan) also requires development to be mindful of surrounding building styles.
10. In this instance, the subservience of the roof dormers, the visually prominent roof line, and the primacy of the original bungalow form is an important part of the locally distinctive character of the area. Consequently, by introducing a large element of built form that erodes this consistent character, I find that there would be considerable harm to the character and appearance of the area. While there were no objections from neighbouring occupiers to the scheme, this is not a reason in itself to allow development which is visually harmful.
11. The appellant has observed that paragraph 127 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) relates primarily to the development of design policies and guidance. However, the provisions of Section 12 of the Framework, and paragraph 130 in particular, seek developments that are visually attractive, are sympathetic to local character including the surrounding built environment, and establish or maintain a strong sense of place. I find that the proposals would conflict with the aims of this paragraph.
12. For the reasons set out above, I therefore conclude that the proposal would result in harm to the character and appearance of both the host dwelling and the surrounding area. This harm would conflict with Policy D1 of the Local Plan, Policy EB2 of the Neighbourhood Plan, and the aims of the Framework.

Other Matters

13. I understand the wishes of the appellant to maximise the living space within their existing property, to provide a more comfortable living space and better accommodate a growing family. However, I do not consider that these

personal circumstances provide sufficient justification to outweigh the harm I have identified from the proposals.

Conclusion

14. For the reasons given above I find that the proposals would conflict with the development plan when read as a whole. There are no material considerations that have been shown to carry sufficient weight to indicate a decision otherwise than in accordance with it. Accordingly, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

K Jones

INSPECTOR