



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 12 March 2024

by Tom Gilbert-Wooldridge BA (Hons) MTP MRTPI IHBC

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 18th March 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/H0520/D/24/3337120

90 Lannesbury Crescent, St Neots, Cambridgeshire PE19 6AF

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mr Paul Lumbis against the decision of Huntingdonshire District Council.
 - The application Ref is 23/01541/HHFUL.
 - The development proposed is a loft conversion.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. A revised version of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published on 19 December 2023. There were no substantive changes of relevance to this appeal. Amended paragraph numbers are referenced below.

Main Issue

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

Reasons

4. The appeal property at 90 Lannesbury Crescent is located within a modern housing development. Permitted development rights for extensions and alterations were removed as part of the original permission for the area. The housing development has a generally uniform character and appearance. Front dormer windows exist on some properties as part of the original estate design, but these windows tend to be smaller than the ones below. Otherwise, there are relatively few roof alterations or extensions within the area.
5. The appeal property is a large, detached two-storey house with a front gable and a sizeable roof. A single storey extension has been built at the rear with large amounts of glazing and smaller windows above. Other properties on this side of the road are similar in size and do not include roof extensions.
6. The proposed windows in the two front dormers would be broadly the same size as the first and ground floor windows below. Consequently, they would not reflect the hierarchy of windows found elsewhere in the area and so the dormers would appear overly dominant and incongruous.
7. The proposed rear dormer would contain windows larger than those at first floor below which would not respect the window hierarchy. Furthermore, the dormer would occupy most of the width of the property and so would create

significant bulk and massing within the roof slope that would not be adequately broken up by the windows and their symmetry. The dormer would effectively create a three-storey property that would not be in keeping with the scale of houses in this part of Lannesbury Crescent. While the extent of public visibility should not be determinative, nevertheless it is possible to walk through to the courtyard behind the appeal property to access other dwellings. Thus, the rear dormer would be more readily visible than might otherwise have been the case.

8. The proposed rooflights on the front roof slope would be minor features in the street scene. The proposed raising of the front gable would not exceed the ridgeline of the main roof to ensure it remained subservient. Therefore, these elements would not harm the character and appearance of the area. However, this does not diminish the overall harm I have identified.
9. The appellant has highlighted examples of roof extensions in nearby streets. The rear dormer at 4 Lannesbury Crescent was erroneously considered to be permitted development and granted a certificate of lawful development according to the Council. It is very large and does not respect the character and appearance of the surrounding area. The rear dormer granted permission at 30 Lannesbury Crescent does not appear to have been built, but it is much smaller than the proposed rear dormer looking at the drawing provided.
10. The rear dormer granted permission at 25 Field Gate Close is also smaller than the proposed. The front dormer is much wider than the proposed but faces onto the adjoining countryside. Moreover, the design is rather awkward with two pitched roof dormers, one with a balcony, connected by a flat roof dormer. This gives the property an unbalanced and top-heavy appearance that does not respect window hierarchy either. It does not set a good design approach for similar roof extensions.
11. While consistency in decision-making is important, none of the highlighted examples justify the proposed development. Moreover, discussions between the appellant and the Council before the application was determined were not binding on the Council's decision. The Council has justified its design concerns.
12. In conclusion, the proposed development would have a harmful effect on the character and appearance of the area. Therefore, it would not accord with Policies LP11 and LP12 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 or Policy A3 of the St Neots Neighbourhood Plan 2014-2029. Amongst other things, these policies seek good design quality that responds well to local context. While NPPF paragraph 123 promotes the effective use of land, the proposal would not represent good design that functions well, adds to the overall quality of the area or be sympathetic to local character as advocated by NPPF paragraph 135.

Conclusion

13. Interested parties have raised concerns with other matters. Given my findings on the main issue it has not been necessary to consider these concerns in any detail. For the above reasons, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Tom Gilbert-Wooldridge

INSPECTOR