



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 4 April 2024

by R Jones BA(Hons) DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 30TH April 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/M0655/D/24/3337944

15 Vine Crescent, Great Sankey, Warrington WA5 3BD

- 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 Sean Francis against the decision of Warrington Borough Council.
 - The application 2023/00937/FULH, dated 28 July 2023, was refused by notice dated 8 November 2023.
 - The development proposed is single storey extension to rear and side with part 2-storey extension to side and modification to hip roof to a pitched roof. Conversion of roofspace with dormer.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matter

2. Since the determination of the planning application the Council adopted the Warrington Borough Council Local Plan 2021/22 – 2038/39 (LP) on 4 December 2023 which forms the development plan. Policy DC6 and ENV8 within the LP now supersedes policies QE7 and QE6 of the Warrington Borough Council Local Plan Core Strategy (2014) (CS) referenced in the Council's decision. These policies seek to ensure a quality of place and provide general amenity protection. On careful reading, the substance of the new policies do not differ materially from those against which the planning application was assessed. Therefore, I have not found it necessary to seek views of the respective parties, and in reaching my decision I have had regard to the relevant policies in the adopted LP.

Main Issues

3. The main issues in this case are the effect of:
 - the proposed two-storey side extension and rear dormer extension on the character and appearance of the host dwelling and wider area; and
 - the rear dormer on the living conditions of the neighbours, with regards outlook and privacy.

Reasons

Character and appearance

4. No.15 Vine Crescent (No.15) is a two-storey semi-detached dwelling, set back from Vine Crescent at an angle on its plot. It is finished in red brick and render with a hipped roof and facing gable, broadly symmetrical to its attached neighbour at No.17 Vine Crescent (No.17).
5. To the side of No.15, a narrow, part single, part two-storey extension is proposed which would accommodate an enlarged hallway adjacent the front door and a new staircase to the first floor. The side extension has been offset from the principal elevation of the host dwelling and would be constructed in red brick to match the existing. Full height, narrow grey aluminium windows are proposed at ground and first floor of the proposed side extension, designed as 'intentionally contemporary.' Whilst these do not reflect the existing window dimensions and finish (which are the same as No.17), the modest overall scale of the side extension itself, and its setback, means it would be subordinate to its host, and would appear a sympathetic (albeit contemporary) addition.
6. I observed on my site visit that most dwellings on Vine Crescent are of the same (or very similar) design as No.15, with a characteristic facing gable and hipped roof. I recognise, however, that a number of dwellings have been altered and extended and there are examples of different dwelling types, including either side of No.15's semi-detached pair. There is therefore a degree of variety, but I found that a hipped roof form is a defining characteristic of the streetscene.
7. In order to accommodate the stair to the proposed ensuite bedroom in the loft space, it is proposed to convert the existing hipped roof to a gable. This gable would be continued through to the proposed two-storey side extension, albeit with a reduced ridge height. The non-attached neighbour (at No.13a Vine Crescent) is set back from Vine Crescent, behind its neighbours, which means that the flank elevation of No.15 is particularly prominent within the streetscene when viewed from the east. The full depth of the proposed double gable of No.15 would be visible and would considerably add to the bulk and massing of the host dwelling. It would appear unduly dominant in the streetscene, and incongruous in the context of the prevailing hipped roof forms.
8. The appellant has drawn my attention to various examples in the surrounding area where alterations have been made to the roof form of dwellings, including hip to gable conversions. This also includes No.3 Vine Crescent which, whilst retaining its characteristic hip, has a large, two-storey flat roof extension to the side. Notwithstanding this example, I observed that hipped roof forms remain a characteristic of the streetscene and I do not find that this example, or those in neighbouring roads, add any particular support to the appeal proposal; the context and character of each dwelling and streetscene differs.
9. The proposed rear dormer would extend much of the width of the original host dwelling, set in only slightly from the edges of the new gable roof. It would also be set just below the ridge of the host roof and extend close to the eaves, with the dormer proposed to be clad in grey aluminium or zinc. Although No.15 is angled on its plot, part of the cheek of the proposed dormer would be seen

from the Vine Crescent and this would increase the bulk, massing and undue prominence of the extensions.

10. For these reasons, I conclude on the first main issue that the proposals would cause significant harm to the character and appearance of the host dwelling and wider streetscene. It would, therefore, conflict with LP Policy DC6 which seeks to ensure proposals make a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness within the surrounding area, having regards to scale, height and massing.

Living conditions

11. The guidance at paragraph 2.2.4 of the Council's *House Extensions Supplementary Planning Document (2021)* (SPD) is that principal habitable room windows on an extended property should not be less than 21m from the habitable room windows in neighbouring houses to ensure reasonable privacy between neighbours. It further states, however, that these distances should be increased for residential properties of 3-storeys or more adjoining conventional house types and the Council will normally apply a further 3m to the interface distance for each additional floor between properties.
12. As described above, a rear dormer is proposed which would fill much of the plane of the extended gabled roof. The dormer window incorporates a single full height glazed window and sliding doors, with a frameless glass balustrade. To the rear of No.15, is No.13 Rowan Close (No.13) which is a two-storey semi-detached dwelling with a modest back garden. On the appellant's own evidence, the distance between the respective rear elevations of these properties is only 22.5m, so the proposed dormer (creating a residential property of 3-storeys) would be in conflict with the SPD guidance. It was also evident from my site visit that the proposed rear dormer, partly because of its proximity, but also its design with large windows and sliding doors, would have a very significant impact on the privacy of the neighbours at No.13, both in terms of their facing windows and back garden. The set back of the proposed windows from the eaves of the proposed dormer would in no way mitigate this impact.
13. I accept that the very nature of a dormer window is to project out from the roof and that they are a common feature in residential areas, allowing additional living space to be accommodated within the roofspace. However, in this case, although set back from the eaves, the design of the dormer with full height glazing means it would also appear an obtrusive and dominating feature when viewed from the back garden of the attached neighbour at No.17 Vine Crescent, to the detriment of its enjoyment.
14. I therefore conclude on the second main issue that the proposed rear dormer would cause harm to the living conditions of neighbours, with regards loss of outlook and privacy. Consequently, in addition to the conflict with the SPD guidance, the proposal would conflict with LP Policy ENV8 in so far as it requires consideration of the need to respect the living conditions of existing neighbouring residential occupiers in relation to overlooking/loss of privacy and outlook.

Other Matters

15. The appellant has explained in the evidence that a number of attempts were made to open a dialogue with the Council during the planning application process, and that there was a willingness to discuss and rectify any issues, if required. I have sympathy with the appellant in this regard, but, unfortunately, it does not change the conclusions I have reached in respect of the harm to both character and appearance, and to the living conditions of neighbours.

Conclusion

16. For the reasons given above, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

R Jones

INSPECTOR