



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 14 May 2024

by R Cahalane BA(Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 31 May 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/D1780/D/24/3337132

30 Shelley Road, City of Southampton, Southampton, SO19 6QJ

- 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 & Mrs Parsons against the decision of Southampton City Council.
 - The application Ref 23/01205/FUL, dated 12 September 2023, was refused by notice dated 07 November 2023.
 - The development proposed is described as loft conversion to provide habitable accommodation with hipped dormers to either side and a hip to gable roof to the rear elevation.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matter

2. The description of development given on the planning application form does not refer to the addition of a front dormer, which is shown on the proposed plans and referred to in the Council's reason for refusal and the appellants' statement. I have made my decision on the basis of the proposed plans and that the development includes a front dormer.

Main Issue

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

Reasons

4. Shelley Road is fronted by mainly detached single-storey dwellings, set back behind grass verges and front gardens, within the residential suburb of Thornhill. Some bungalows along Shelley Road have been subject to roof-level alterations, including front and side dormers. Nevertheless, there is an overall consistency in the age, form and pattern of development, including pitched roofs and symmetrical front bay windows, which contributes to the area's cohesive character and appearance.
5. The appeal site (No. 30) is a detached bungalow located towards the lower end of Shelley Road as it runs downhill from Browning Avenue. No. 30, and a number of other dwellings further down Shelley Road close to it, feature relatively unaltered hipped pitched roof forms. The set-back from the road, scale and form of No. 30 mean that it sits comfortably within the surrounding development.

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6. The appeal scheme proposes the addition of a pitched front dormer extension to integrate with the existing main ridge, to create habitable accommodation in the roof of No. 30. The proposed side dormer extensions would each contain deep crown roof forms hipped to the side, at the same existing ridge height and set in from the side eaves. The proposed side dormers would each project to the rear across the proposed hip-to-gable rear extension and would appear prominent looking towards No. 30. Their combination with the proposed front dormer, whilst providing a somewhat symmetrical roof form, would lead to an incongruous top-heavy appearance that fails to successfully integrate with the host dwelling and its immediate surroundings.
 7. The appeal proposal has been amended from a previous scheme that proposed a hip-to-gable front and rear roof extension and flat-roof dormers to both sides (LPA Ref 23/00539/FUL). Notwithstanding that the appellants have sought to address the Council's concerns and are not altering the ridge height or adding a front gable, the current iteration would still contribute significant scale and bulk beyond the original roof form, which would be clearly apparent and discordant with the existing proportions of No. 30. As a consequence, the proposed side and front dormers would visually dominate the host dwelling and cause it to appear harmfully out of place in the surrounding street scene.
 8. The appellants have provided photographs of existing roof extensions along Shelley Road that they consider are similar to the appeal scheme. I saw various examples of roof extensions and front dormers during my site visit, including on properties on the opposite side of the road to No. 30. While I do not know the precise planning history or policy context relevant to these examples, the majority of those that I observed in the immediate vicinity are generally well contained within the original roof form, of modest proportions, and respect the scale and proportions of the host dwellings. Although the latest design iteration may adopt some similarities to other dormer examples, adopting a front pitched dormer and larger side dormers are not characteristic of the prevailing development pattern. I therefore do not consider that the other examples of dormers in the vicinity set a precedent that would justify the appeal scheme.
 9. The appeal proposals include a rear hip-to-gable extension that does not form part of the Council's reason for refusal; nor does the officer report cite harm in respect of this element of the scheme. Following my site visit I am satisfied that this element would be unobtrusive and not, of itself, harmful. Nevertheless, while the rear extension element would be satisfactory, it is the harmful impact of the proposed front and side dormers that lead me to the view that the proposed development would unacceptably harm the character and appearance of the host dwelling and the surrounding area.
 10. The proposed development therefore runs contrary to saved Policies SDP1 (i), SDP7 (iv) and (v), and SDP9 (i) and (v) of the City of Southampton Local Plan Review (2015), and Policy CS13 of the Local Development Framework Core Strategy Development Plan Document (2015). These policies require, amongst other things, development to respect the scale and proportion of existing buildings and their surroundings. The proposals also fail to satisfy the guidance in the Council's Residential Design Guide (2006), notably insofar as it requires extensions to be subordinate to the original dwelling and to not create a negative visual impact. Conflict also arises with the National Planning Policy Framework (revised 2023), particularly policies that seek to ensure

developments add to the overall quality of the area, are visually attractive, and sympathetic to the surrounding built environment.

Other Matters

11. I appreciate that the appellants have sought to overcome the concerns the Council had with the previous scheme and note their comments in relation to the feedback and communications with the Council and its officers during the current and previous planning application process. However, my decision has stemmed from an assessment of the planning merits of the proposal based on policy, evidence and the site-specific circumstances before me. Therefore, the Council's handling of the planning application and the frustration this has caused the appellants has not had a bearing on my decision to dismiss the appeal.

Conclusion

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

R Cahalane

INSPECTOR