



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 13 August 2024

by K Mansell BA (Hons) MPhil TP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 06 September 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/E2340/D/24/3342569

2 Wheatcroft Avenue, Fence, Lancashire BB12 9QL

- 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 and Mrs C Lyle against the decision of Pendle Borough Council.
 - The application Ref is 23/0800/HHO.
 - The development proposed is erection of rear and side dormer to facilitate a loft conversion.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

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

Reasons

3. Wheatcroft Avenue is a cul-de-sac of detached bungalows and two-storey dwellings. Whilst there is no singular house type, the properties share a similar materials palette, being largely built in artificial stone with tiled roofs and small sections of render to some of the bungalows. With a few exceptions, most houses have uninterrupted roof plains and an absence of dormer windows. Even if the dwellings are not of any particular architectural merit, these elements combine to give a degree of consistency to the street scene.
4. The appeal property at No 2 is a bungalow situated at the entrance to Wheatcroft Avenue at its junction with Wheatley Lane Road, from which the back of the property can be seen. Its roofscape is prominent from this roadside vantage point. Whilst the roof pitch to the main house is symmetrical, the roof slope to the rear elevation is partly elongated where it extends over a garage attached to the bungalow's back wall. The appeal proposal would introduce a rear and side dormer above this garage with a rear facing juliet balcony. The scheme was amended during the period that the Council was considering it, replacing a double pitched dormer with a one pitched dormer design. The Council determined the application based on the amended plans, and so have I.
5. The Council's Design Principles Supplementary Planning Document (2009) (DP SPD) provides guidance on designing domestic extensions. In relation to dormers, it includes advice that they should not be so large as to dominate the roof slope, nor should they cover more than one third of the roof area to the street

frontage. In this case, the dormer window would extend across nearly the whole roof slope of the garage. It would be almost half the width of the bungalow's main roof, such that it would add significant massing to its rear elevation. Whilst No 2 is set back from the road behind a modest garden, and the surrounding area is architecturally diverse, the size and location of the dormer would nonetheless be a highly visible and substantial addition to the property given the prominent corner location. This would be to the detriment of the wider street scene.

6. Furthermore, the height of the dormer would be substantial, incorporating an asymmetrical pitched roof design and doors to serve the juliet balcony. On my site visit, within the immediate proximity of the appeal property on Wheatcroft Avenue, I saw dormer windows to the front and rear of No 1 on the opposite corner, and I also observed a small front dormer to No 5. However, these all had a flat roof and were of a modest height with windows rather than a door or balcony. The appeal scheme would therefore represent an incongruous addition. Even the use of materials to match the host dwelling would not mitigate the harm, as it would still represent a visually obtrusive roof extension irrespective of the materials used.
7. The appellant has drawn my attention to other properties in the area that have dormer windows or permission to extend. These include a side dormer to 22 St Annes Drive. Whilst of a reasonably substantial width, it would have a flat roof and a modest height compared to the asymmetrical pitched roof design of the appeal scheme. On my site visit, I saw other dormer windows in the area, including to dwellings on Forester Drive, Laund Gate and Hoarstones Avenue. However, in contrast to the appeal proposal, these were also designed with a flat roof or a symmetrical pitched roof and did not include a door or juliet balcony. Whilst 4 Wheatcroft Avenue has planning permission to raise its ridge height and has built an extension facing the appeal property, and No 7 has an extension that is built in wood cladding, neither of these include a dormer window. They are therefore not directly comparable with the appeal proposal, which I must consider on its individual merits. Accordingly, these examples have not altered my overall decision.
8. For these reasons, I conclude that the proposal would be harmful to the character and appearance of the surrounding area. It would therefore conflict with Policy ENV2 of the Local Plan for Pendle Part 1: Core Strategy 2011-2030 (adopted December 2015). This policy seeks, amongst other matters, to secure the highest quality design that makes a positive contribution to the local identity and character. The proposal would also conflict with guidance at Paragraph 139 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework), which promotes the importance of good design. It would further be contrary to guidance within the Council's DP SPD in relation to dormer design.

Other Matters

9. I recognise that the works would facilitate the conversion of the loft to provide the appellant with additional living accommodation to meet their needs, and those of future occupiers. Even if it would represent an efficient use of the site, planning decisions are taken in the public interest and such personal circumstances do not, in my view, outweigh the harm to the surrounding character of the area that I have identified. I have also had regard to guidance within the Framework and recognise that there may be some social, economic and environmental benefits arising from the appeal scheme. These include being energy efficient in its construction, creating a larger family home and providing local employment to build it. I have also

been referred to other benefits, such as a potential rise in Council Tax, albeit there is no evidence that this would be the case. In any event, given the very modest size of the appeal scheme, these benefits would be limited and would not outweigh the substantial harm that I have identified. Nor does the lack of objection or comment from neighbours, nor the absence of ecological impacts, justify development that would be harmful to the character and appearance of the area.

Conclusion

10. The appeal proposal would conflict with the development plan as a whole, and there are no material considerations that would indicate a decision otherwise would be appropriate. For the reasons given above, I therefore conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

K Mansell

INSPECTOR