



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 4 September 2024

by Martin Andrews MA(Planning) BSc(Econ) DipTP & DipTP(Dist) MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 30 September 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/C1435/D/24/3345895

25 Cornmill Gardens, Wannock, Wiltingdon BN26 5NJ

- 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 Natalie and Steve Thompson against the decision of Wealden District Council.
 - The application Ref. is WD/2024/0713/F.
 - The development proposed is a front dormer with a balcony to extend the existing loft extension.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matter

2. The appeal documentation includes two different descriptions of the property's address. I have used the address on the application form and the Council's Decision Notice.

Main Issues

3. The main issues are (i) the effect of the development on the character and appearance of the host dwelling and the street scene, and (ii) the effect on the living conditions for the occupiers of Nos. 23 & 27 Cornmill Gardens as regards privacy.

Reasons

4. On the first main issue, I saw on my visit that Cornmill Gardens is part of an established residential area characterised by bungalows of a modest size and a conventional late C20th design. Although there are both detached and semi-detached dwellings and a handful of 'house types' this is essentially a locality where a tightly knit development pattern succeeds because of the overall visual unity of external materials (predominantly brick and tiles); simplicity of built form, and proportionality of scale. The appellants refer to Filching Close 200m south and I agree that this is quite different, but it is an exception to the more immediate context described above.
5. As the grounds of appeal point out, some of the dwellings in the area already have dormers including a front dormer at No. 27 next door to the appeal property. However in that case, even though there is little or no set-down from the ridge, there are good-sized gaps to the flanks and particularly to the eaves line. As a result, the size is modest and proportionate to the roof plane.

6. In contrast the appeal scheme, as well as having essentially no set-down from the ridge, would leave only a modest distance to the sides and eaves. It would occupy the majority of the roof slope and dominate the front of the bungalow. And this disproportionately large scale and bulk, together with the balcony and its railings, would draw the eye as a wholly inappropriate addition to the dwelling and out of keeping with its setting. As such, I consider that the dormer and balcony would cause unacceptable harm to the character and appearance of the host dwelling and this part of the 'street scene' of Cornmill Gardens.
7. Turning to the second main issue, the dormer would facilitate direct views at close quarters into the front gardens of Nos. 23 and 27 on either side. Even though this is not the private area for these occupiers, the bungalows are close together. And with fairly small overall plot sizes and open views to the front, it is likely that the enjoyment of their open space would be affected by the ability of their neighbours to stand on the balcony and lean over the railings. The residents of both properties have strongly objected to the proposal.
8. In the case of Nos. 9 and 10 Mill Way to the south, their rear private gardens would be overlooked. Even though there is the front garden of No. 27 in between, the distance is short and not 'distant' as claimed for the appellants, and the perceived and actual loss of privacy would be considerable. Again, there have been objections from one of these properties and indeed other residents close by who feel that their amenities would be compromised by the proposal.
9. I have carefully considered the grounds of appeal. These include the points that there is a family of five with a parent working from home and cramped accommodation. However, a growing family and their particular circumstances cannot always rely on extending an existing property to solve these problems, especially when - as in this case - it has consequences for the character and appearance of the dwelling and its surroundings and the living conditions of neighbours, including privacy.
10. Overall, I find that on both main issues there would be a harmful conflict with the relevant policies, in particular Policies EN27 & HG10 of the Wealden Local Plan 1998 and Section 12 of the National Planning Policy Framework December 2023.
11. For these reasons and having had regard to all other matters raised the appeal is dismissed.

Martin Andrews

INSPECTOR