



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 16 June 2025

by **P D Sedgwick BSc (Hons) DipTP MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 27 June 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/J1535/D/25/3359948

28 Willow Tree Close, Lambourne, Romford, Essex, RM4 1BL

- 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 Glen and Beverley Evans against the decision of Epping Forest District Council.
 - The application Ref is EPF/2018/24.
 - The development proposed is loft conversion with rear facing dormer, three conservation style roof windows in the rear roof slope, and three conservation style roof windows in the front roof slope.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matter

2. Subsequent to the refusal of permission for the proposed development the Government published its revised National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) in December 2024. Further minor amendments were published on 7 February 2025, containing corrections and a clarification. The wording of the relevant paragraphs of the new Framework are similar to that of the 2023 version. Therefore, I am satisfied that they do not affect the substantive matters of the appeal and that considering the development against the revised Framework without seeking further comments from the parties on it would not be prejudicial to their respective cases.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is whether the proposed development would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Abridge Conservation Area (CA).

Reasons

4. The appeal property is a detached 2 storey house in a small housing estate set back from the village centre at the western edge of the Abridge Conservation Area. The CA comprises a mix of commercial and residential properties of various ages and designs, including black timber framed plaster clad and painted brick buildings. Although Willow Tree Close is a relatively modern development, predating the CA designation, the appeal property incorporates a front projecting first floor hanging gable, steeply pitched roof and is located close to the road edge, which reflects design features that contribute to the special interest of several key buildings within the CA.

5. The estate road is set behind the historic core of the CA, which is focused on Market Place, from which the appeal property is not visible. Consequently, the proposed roof lights at the front of the house would only be visible from within the housing estate, in which several other houses have front roof lights. However, approaching the village along the B172, Ambridge Road, the rear of the house is clearly visible across fields north of the River Roding, and along with neighbouring houses defines the edge of the village and CA. None of the rear roofs from this view have been altered with either roof lights or dormer windows.
6. The proposed dormer's roof ridge would join that of the main roof and, because of its width, size, and window position relative to the proposed roof lights, would appear dominant, obtrusive and out of character. Given the small scale of the development within the context of the Conservation Area as a whole, it would not harm its character. There would however be harm in terms of its appearance. The harm would be localised, limited and less than substantial but would nevertheless be contrary to Policies DM7 and DM9 of the Epping Forest District Local Plan 2011-2033 (2023) and the Framework which require development to be of a high quality that preserves or enhances heritage assets and their setting.
7. Any harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset requires justification and, in accordance with paragraph 215 of the Framework, I must weigh the harm against the public benefits of the proposal. There would be modest benefits arising from improved living accommodation and employment during construction. However, such benefits would not outweigh the harm to the appearance of the Abridge Conservation Area and its setting.

Other Matters

8. The appellant has provided several examples of roof lights and dormers approved by the council. The rear dormers at Nos 6, 7, 17 and 21 Willow Tree Close, and front dormers on those properties and other houses within the estate, would not be visible from the public highway on a key route into the village, as is the case with the rear dormer and rooflights in the appeal proposal. The dormer windows at No 29 are integral to the original design of the house, as noted by the appellant, rather than an alteration. As such the examples provided are not directly comparable with the appeal proposal. In any case, I have come to my own view regarding the development rather than relying on the approach the Council may have taken elsewhere.
9. The absence of an objection by the Parish Council and lack of impact on the landscape or neighbours living conditions do not weigh in favour of the development.

Conclusion

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

P D Sedgwick

INSPECTOR