

Conservation Officer comments for: 23/00971/HOU

Proposal: Single storey rear extension, extension and conversion of loft space, increase in roof height and alteration to dwelling

Site: 6 Shakespeare Drive, Hinckley

Date Submitted: 07/11/2023

This proposal seeks to erect a rear extension, extend and convert the loft space including an increase in the roof height, and make alterations to the existing bungalow.

Site context and significance

No.6 Shakespeare Drive is located within the Hollycroft Conservation Area. It was originally constructed in the 1930s and is largely typical of the informal residential layout of mid-20th century development located around Hollycroft Park where the area is characterised by semi-detached and detached dwellings of various scales, designs and styles reflective of this period of architecture. Although originally of some architectural interest, the property and its once larger plot has undergone several modern extensions and other changes not particularly in keeping with its original character. These changes include subdividing and extending the bungalow to create an additional bungalow (known as 5A Shakespeare Drive), the erection of a 1.5 storey gable fronted garage to the side of the original property and then its subsequent extension and conversion to create an additional dwelling (known as 6A Shakespeare Drive). The property itself has had its original roof covering changed to concrete roof tiles and replacement cottage style windows.

The property is set back from the street scene behind a relatively large front garden with some soft landscaping and low brick wall to the front which is typical of the leafy and green streetscape of Shakespeare Drive. The set back from the street does slightly limit the detrimental visual effect from the various inappropriate alterations that have been made to the property so overall it is considered to make a neutral contribution to the character and appearance and thus significance of the conservation area.

The purpose of the conservation area is to preserve and enhance the character and appearance of inter-war Hollycroft Park and its surrounding properties and streets. Its key characteristics are identified in the Hollycroft Conservation Area Appraisal (HCAA) (2011).

The HCAA identifies the townscape of Shakespeare Drive as a distinctive character area. It consists of high-quality detached properties set within large gardens with high levels of vegetation. The houses are stepped back from the sweeping curve of the road and are generally behind tall hedges and mature vegetation providing a sense of seclusion and privacy of the area. Their frontages face Hollycroft Park creating an interesting spatial arrangement emphasising the close relationship between the 1930s style suburban architecture and its 'quasi-rural' surroundings. Dense vegetation and tall hedges combined with wooden fences and low brick walls of varying designs have been used to define the building plots, such that the architecture is only occasionally glimpsed from the road itself, providing a sense of seclusion and privacy. Architecture includes predominantly pitched roofs covered by either natural slate or clay roof tiles, brick or rendered walls, and buildings typically of two storeys. The piecemeal development of Shakespeare Drive is reflected in the variety of built forms. Windows vary in size, and are mainly of timber and set regularly across the facades.

The HCAA provides a summary of the significance of the conservation area. Of relevance to this proposal is:

- The spacious plot layout, lack of formality and uniformity in the way buildings fill the plot
- Architecture includes predominantly pitched roofs, brick or rendered walls, and buildings typically of two storeys

The HCAA identifies how the significance of the conservation is vulnerable due to (considered of relevance to this proposal):

- Inappropriate alterations to elevations and extensions to existing buildings, including street facing dormer windows
- Inappropriate proportions of fenestrations, architectural details, scale and form of new development
- New development that does not reflect the established street pattern

Relevant Acts, National and Local Policies and Guidance

Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 places a general duty in the exercise of planning functions stating that special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area.

Section 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) provides the national policy on conserving and enhancing the historic environment. Paragraphs 199-202 of the NPPF require great weight to be given to the conservation of designated heritage assets when considering the impact of a proposed development on its significance, for any harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset to have clear and convincing justification, and for that harm to be weighed against the public benefits of a proposal.

Policies DM11 and DM12 of the Site Allocations and Development Management Policies (SADMP) Development Plan Document seek to protect and enhance the historic environment and heritage assets. All development proposals affecting the significance of heritage assets and their setting will be assessed in accordance with Policy DM11 and will require justification as set out in this policy. Policy DM12 requires all development proposals to accord with Policy DM10: Development and Design. Policy DM12 also states that development proposals should ensure the significance of a conservation area is preserved and enhanced.

The Hollycroft Conservation Area Appraisal provides additional guidance for new development within the Hollycroft Conservation Area stating that:

- Any new development must take account of the established character of the area by being of appropriate scale and density utilising traditional materials so that the buildings will make a positive contribution to the character of the conservation area
- To be of a high standard of design that respects the established character and appearance of the conservation area
- Materials to be of a high quality and type appropriate to the development and its surroundings

The proposal

The proposal seeks to raise the height of the roof of the existing bungalow to provide first floor accommodation. To the front elevation two hipped roof dormer windows are proposed in addition to a small number of roof lights to serve the accommodation. To the rear a large extension is proposed along much of the width of the elevation, consisting of a central one and half storey element with a largely glazed gable, which then slopes down on one side with a single pitched roof over a courtyard and extended ground floor accommodation.

Further rooflights are proposed for the rear elevation to serve the first-floor accommodation. The dormer windows are to be constructed of brick and tile to match the existing dwelling and have simple casement style windows. The side gable apexes of the existing dwelling and the proposed rear extensions are proposed to have rendered walls and the extension would have a tile roof. No alterations are proposed to the access and its associated landscaping along the site entrance to Shakespeare Drive.

Impact of the proposal upon heritage assets

The proposed increase in height of the roof at the ridge is relatively limited, and accompanied with the insertion of the dormer windows would result in providing the dwelling with the appearance of a dormer bungalow, which in my opinion still reflects the prevailing suburban scale and character of the properties elsewhere in the conservation area and facing into Hollycroft Park. The proposed extent of the increase in the ridge line of the existing dwelling is not excessive and would not be overbearing upon or inconsistent with the scale of the flanking bungalow no.5A Shakespeare Drive.

The HCAA identifies that the conservation area is vulnerable to change from inappropriate alterations to elevations and extensions to existing buildings, including street facing dormer windows. In this case as the host dwelling is the only bungalow in the street scene in my opinion dormers can be incorporated into the design and not have an adverse visual effect given that they have been appropriately designed with their positioning above the existing ground floor bay windows and with a hipped roof style angled to the same pitch as the side elevation of the bungalow. In my opinion the incorporation of dormer windows on this particular dwelling would not set a challenging precedent elsewhere in the conservation area as the majority of other properties facing the Park are two storeys in scale and allow for no particular opportunity for dormers to be introduced into the front elevations, other than perhaps via loft conversion, and which would likely be resisted due to an uncharacteristic increase in scale and unbalancing of such elevations.

The final alterations to the front elevation concern the installation of Velux windows. The windows appear necessary to serve the accommodation so are justified from a practical point of view and they are relatively well balanced in their siting on the elevation. If the application is to be approved all Velux windows should be conservation style and fitted flush to the roof plane to ensure their visual impact is limited: such details could be secured via a pre-commencement planning condition regarding materials for external elevations.

The extensions and alterations to the rear of the dwelling have a potentially unorthodox form and design but in conservation terms given the proposed development sits below the proposed new ridge line of the dwelling and due to its siting to the rear this element of the development would have no adverse visual impact upon the character and appearance of the conservation area.

The materials proposed for the extension and alterations either match those of the existing dwelling, such as the facing brick for the dormer windows and tiles for all new roofs and roof alterations, or reflect those prevalent in the wider area, such as the rendered finish for the side elevations and rear extension. As above, the details of the Velux windows should be appropriately specified, and the proposal may provide an opportunity to replace the existing roof covering with a traditional natural clay tile finish instead of the inappropriate concrete tile roof. Even if this could not be achieved for the alterations to the roof on the existing dwelling, the use of a natural clay tile on the front facing dormer windows could be considered. If the application is to be approved, then a planning condition requiring details of all materials for external elevations is requested to ensure that the character and appearance of the host dwelling and wider conservation area is preserved.

Summary

Overall, it is considered that the proposed extensions and alterations to the dwelling have an appropriate scale, form, design and construction materials, subject to details being confirmed by a condition, and would result in a neutral impact upon the character and appearance of the host dwelling no.6 Shakespeare Drive and the wider Hollycroft Conservation Area. Consequently, the proposal will comply with Policies DM11 and DM12 the SADMP, section 16 of the NPPF and the statutory duty of section 72 of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.