

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 8 November 2016

by J A B Gresty MA MRICS

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government

Decision date: 15th November 2016

Appeal Ref: APP/X1925/D/16/3158614

29 The Chilterns, Hitchin SG4 9PP

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mr & Mrs Lars Granhed against the decision of North Hertfordshire District Council.
 - The application Ref 16/01171/1HH, dated 11 May 2016, was refused by notice dated 12 July 2016.
 - The development proposed is two-storey side and rear extensions with further single-storey extensions to front and rear.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue in this case is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the local area.

Reasons

3. The Chilterns is residential road with a "u" shaped layout and a mixture of detached and semi-detached houses on it. It is situated in the Hitchin Conservation Area. The appeal property is a two-storey, semi-detached house situated on the eastern arm of the "U". A distinctive characteristic of the eastern arm of the road is the semi-detached houses with prominent hipped and part-hipped roofs clad with attractive green glazed tiles. The pairs of semi-detached houses are set back from the road in good sized plots with clear visible space between them at first floor level. There are also several large detached houses next to this group of green roofed houses which, whilst they do not have coloured roof tiles, reflect the design of the green roofed houses and are similarly set in spacious plots with spaces between the individual buildings. Overall, whilst there is a variety of design and style of building on The Chilterns, the eastern arm of the road has an attractive spacious character and appearance which is enhanced by the distinctive design and appearance of the green roofed houses and outbuildings.
 4. The appeal property has a grey concrete tile roof whilst its adjoining neighbour at No 28 has a green glazed tile roof. The property has a flat-roofed, single garage which occupies most of the width of the space to the side of the house.
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In combination with the single-storey garage to the side of the neighbouring house at No 30, the appeal property has a distinct visual gap between it and the neighbouring house at first floor level.

5. The width of the gap between the appeal property and its neighbour at No 30 is very similar, if not the same, as the space between the two pairs of green roofed houses immediately opposite on the other side of the road. This gives the layout of these pairs of houses a reasonably regular appearance which contributes to this part of The Chilterns having a generally planned character and appearance. Whilst the roof of the appeal property does not add positively to the character or appearance of the appeal property or eastern arm of The Chilterns as a whole, overall the design and layout of the appeal property is in keeping with the spacious character and planned appearance of this part of The Chilterns.
6. The appeal proposal includes a two-storey side and rear extension. The side wall of the two-storey extension would stand about 0.6 metres from the boundary of the property with No 30, less than the 1.0 metre minimum space at first floor level sought by saved Policy 28 of the North Hertfordshire District Council District Local Plan No 2 (DLP). The development would result in loss of nearly half of the visible gap between Nos 29 and 30 at first floor level, detracting from the spacious and planned appearance of this part of The Chilterns.
7. The development would include replacement of the existing concrete tile roof with green glazed tiles. The use of green tiles of similar design and hue to those of the neighbouring houses would be a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the host property and this part of The Chilterns.
8. Whilst the roofs of the extensions would be hipped and in keeping with the design of the host building, the front elevation of the side extension would have a cat-slide roof extending down to about ground floor ceiling height. Cat-slide roofs are not a characteristic feature of the local area but the proposed cat-slide roof would not be unduly prominent in the street scene and it would not be reason alone to dismiss the appeal.

Other Matter

9. The appellant refers to the Inspector's observations regarding the plot layout on The Chilterns in his decision for appeal APP/X1925/A/11/2163639. The appeal concerned No 24 which is situated on the bottom arm of the "U" and is one of a cluster of newer two-storey, detached houses which have little visual relationship with the appeal property and other houses on eastern arm of the road. Because these two arms of the road are so different in the character and appearance, I consider that the Inspector's observations have limited bearing on the main issues of this appeal.

Conclusion

10. At the heart of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework), there is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development and new development should respond to local character. Also, Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires decision makers to have special regard

to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a Conservation Area. The Conservation Area Character Statement identifies the green tiled roofs of the original 1930's houses as a distinctive feature of this part of the Hitchin Conservation Area but it is silent with respect to the layout and design of the buildings. However, this does not exclude the importance of the layout of development to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and local area as a whole. In this case I concur with the Council that the visual gaps between the buildings on the eastern arm of The Chilterns contribute positively to the character and appearance of the local area and this part of the Conservation Area, not least because they enable the green tiled, hipped roofs to be seen from a range of oblique angles, showing off the visually interesting roof shapes as well as their colour.

11. The proposed re-roofing of the appeal property would result in a significant enhancement of the appearance of the building when viewed in isolation. However, the reduction in the visible gap between Nos 29 and 30 would detract from the spacious pattern of development on this part of The Chilterns and which I consider to be an important contributory factor in the display of the green roofs in the street scene. As identified by the Council, repetition of similar two-storey side extensions to other properties on this part of The Chilterns would be likely to result in significant harm to the character and appearance of the local area and this part of the Hitchin Conservation Area. Therefore, on balance and for the above reasons, I conclude that the proposed development would neither preserve nor enhance the character and appearance of the Hitchin Conservation Area and it would not represent sustainable development as sought by the Framework. Therefore, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

J A B Gresty

INSPECTOR