

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/J1915/D/16/3156736

72 Whempstead Road, Benington, Hertfordshire SG2 7DE

- 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 Punia Gurinder against the decision of East Hertfordshire District Council.
 - The application Ref 3/16/0701/HH, dated 23 March 2016, was refused by notice dated 25 May 2016.
 - The development proposed is a two-storey front and side extension and associated drive and front garden landscaping.
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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 area.

Reasons

3. The appeal property is situated in a good sized, irregularly shaped plot outside the built boundaries of the small village of Benington. The property is one of a line of dwellings which forms a ribbon of development on this side of the road. Whilst there are many dwellings in the local area, the surrounding landscape is characterised by fields enclosed by hedgerows and prominent blocks of woodland. Although the line of houses in which the appeal property is situated has a largely semi-suburban character and appearance, the surrounding countryside is predominantly rural in character and appearance.
 4. The property is a substantial, two-storey house with a single-storey arm which links the main body of the house to a large double garage. Cumulatively the two-storey and single-storey buildings span across more or less the whole width of the plot.
 5. The appeal proposal is for extension of the house at both ground floor and first floor levels. The development would largely replace the single-storey arm with a two-storey extension which would project forward of the front elevation of the single-storey arm to be in line with the front wall of the main house. To the rear, the extension would project back to just beyond the existing rear projection of the two-storey house. The result would be to increase the width of
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the two-storey element of the house by more than 50% , greatly increasing the visual bulk of the house at first floor level. On completion, about two-thirds of the width of the plot would be occupied by two-storey development. Taking into account the size of the house, and the size of the garage which would remain unchanged, the extended house would appear very large in relation to its plot and the collective bulk of the house and garage would be prominent when viewed obliquely across next door's front garden of No 70 from Whempstead Road to the north.

6. Whilst No 70 is a large property which has recently been extended with second floor accommodation built into its roof space, it occupies a relatively small proportion of its plot compared to the appeal property. Consequently there is clear open space to the side of the house at No 70. Other nearby properties in the line of houses, including No 74 on the other side of the appeal property, are noticeably smaller than the appeal property.
7. Overall, the extended house would appear large and bulky in relation to its plot. In this respect it would be at odds with the prevailing pattern of development on this part of Whempstead Road. Policy GBC3 of the East Herts Local Plan Second Review (LP) seeks to restrict development in the countryside and indicates that permission for construction of new buildings in this location will not be given except in certain circumstances, including limited extension to existing dwellings in accordance with LP Policy ENV5. Outside the main settlements and larger villages, LP Policy ENV5 requires extensions of dwellings, whether individually or cumulatively, not to disproportionately alter the size of the original dwelling nor intrude into the openness or rural qualities of the surrounding area.
8. The appeal property has been extended considerably in the past and the proposed development would result in the floor area of the original house being increased by some 122% from about 212 square metres to some 470 square metres. Whilst the LP does not specify what constitutes a disproportionate increase in the size of a dwelling, the considerable visual bulk of the extended house is an indication that in this case the cumulative 122% increase would be disproportionate, contrary to the requirements of LP Policy ENV5. Further, the bulky appearance of the extended house would have a significantly adverse effect on the visual openness of this part of Whempstead Road, resulting in erosion of the rural character and appearance of the surrounding countryside, contrary to the requirements of LP Policy ENV5.

Other Matter

9. The appeal scheme includes realignment of the driveway to the property and a new entrance onto the highway. Details of landscaping and the proposed new gateway have not been submitted. However, I consider that this could be secured by way of condition and the lack of detail would not be reason to dismiss the 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. The Framework also indicates that the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside should be recognised.

11. In this case the proposed works would reflect the design of the existing house but the extended house would appear disproportionately large and bulky in relation to its plot, resulting in a incongruous development which would have an unduly adverse effect on the visual openness and rural character of the area. Accordingly, on balance and for the above reasons, I conclude that the proposed development would not represent sustainable development as sought by the Framework and the appeal should be dismissed.

J A B Gresty

INSPECTOR