

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 5 December 2016

by Les Greenwood MRTPI

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

Decision date: 19th December 2016

Appeal Ref: APP/C1950/D/16/3157832

9 Youngs Rise, Welwyn Garden City AL8 6RT

- 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 and Mrs P Groves against the decision of Welwyn Hatfield Council.
 - The application Ref 6/2016/0748/HOUSE was refused by notice dated 16 June 2016.
 - The development proposed is a single storey rear/side infill extension and a part single storey, part 2 storey side extension.
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Decision

1. I dismiss the appeal.

Main issue

2. The main issue is whether the proposal would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Welwyn Garden City Conservation Area.

Reasons

3. 9 Youngs Rise is located within a leafy, spacious residential area of mainly 2 storey houses with hipped roofs and 1.5 storey houses with gambrel (dual pitch) roofs. No 9 is a detached hipped roof house with a wing projecting to the front – part of a row of 4 houses with Nos 9 and 3 forming roughly mirrored bookends to a pair of semis between. These are handsome, well-proportioned houses with comparatively narrow plan depths showing on the end sections.
 4. 2 separate extensions are proposed. The smaller of the 2 would be a single storey flat roofed extension infilling a space to one side and to the rear. This would be largely screened from public view and would fit in with the form of the building, causing no harm to local character or appearance.
 5. The larger extension would form a 2 storey wing to the other side, with a small flat roofed single storey section at the front and a much longer one to the rear. This part of the proposal would be perched above the street as it rises up towards No 9 and the 2 storey section would therefore be prominent in the street scene, despite the presence of street trees.
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6. The proposed new 2 storey section would have a greater plan depth than the existing building sections, requiring a small area of flat roof at the top in order to keep the extension's height down while matching the roof pitches. The result would be overly bulky and awkward in comparison to the existing house – an aspect which would be accentuated by the extensive flat roofed single storey section at the rear.
7. The houses in this area are generally laid out with gaps to the side allowing views through and space for trees and hedges. The main proposed extension would stretch a long way back on the plot, very close to a boundary that is currently marked by pollarded trees, cramping them and possibly even necessitating their removal. It would therefore likely cause a loss of the greenery which is part of the special character of this area. Although there would still be a wide gap to the next house, the extension would nevertheless appear cramped within its own plot, extending 2 storey development across nearly the whole of this wide frontage.
8. I do find that there would be some townscape benefit to building a new 2 storey wing on this side of the building, as it would break up the long side elevation created by an existing rear extension. This factor would not, however, be sufficient to override my concerns about the extent and design of the proposal.
9. I note that the submitted plans do not show 2 existing chimneys. The appellant advises that there is no intention to demolish these features and I accept that this matter could be dealt with by condition. My attention has been drawn to several other developments in the local area, but none appear to me to be particularly similar. I have considered this proposal on its own merits, bearing in mind the local context.
10. Although I find some benefit in the proposal, I nevertheless conclude that the main proposed extension would harm the character and appearance of the conservation area. The proposal therefore conflicts with the aims of Policies D1 and D2 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005, the Council's Supplementary Design Guidance and the National Planning Policy Framework, to secure high quality design that respects and relates to the character and context of the area, sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets.
11. I recognise the appellants' reasonable desire to improve their family home, but this is not sufficient reason to override the harm that would be caused to a heritage asset, even though this harm would be, in the terms of the Framework, less than substantial.
12. For the reasons set out above, and having regard to all other matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should not succeed.

Les Greenwood

INSPECTOR