

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 22 December 2016

by Gary Deane BSc (Hons) DipTP MRTPI

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

Decision date: 6 January 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/B3410/D/16/3160443

8 Shotwood Close, Rolleston on Dove DE13 9BN

- 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 Mrs Anita Wheeler against the decision of East Staffordshire Borough Council.
 - The application Ref P/2016/00768 was refused by notice dated 4 August 2016.
 - The development proposed is the erection of 2-storey front infill extension.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the host building and the local area.

Reasons

3. The appeal property is a 2-storey detached house in a modern style residential development mainly along Shotwood Close. No 8 faces open land at the end of a private drive that spurs from the main highway. In the vicinity of the site, dwellings are similar in age and style with most having broadly symmetrical front elevations that often include central forward projections. Houses are generally sited and orientated differently within their plots with some closer to neighbouring buildings than others. Rolleston Conservation Area (CA) is some distance from the rear of the site, beyond existing houses and the highway.
 4. The proposed front extension would be 2-storey with a gable end and a ridgeline set just below that of the main house. It would be considerable in scale and mass and could not reasonably be described as subservient to the scale and form of the original dwelling, as the appellant suggests. The new addition would stand to one side of the front elevation, projecting forward of the main front wall to largely infill the gap between the main house and the detached double garage. In this position, the new extension would not project any further forward than the dwelling at the opposite end of the private driveway. The proposed 2-storey built form would, however, unduly disrupt the symmetry in the front elevation, which is a distinctive feature of the host building and other properties nearby, by unbalancing the main façade.
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5. As the new 2-storey gable would be much taller and wider than its existing counterpart in the middle of the front elevation, the proposal would also visually overwhelm the host building. That the proposal would just cut across the existing gable and include an offset front window, which would relate poorly to the position of the other front windows in the main house, would accentuate the awkward relationship between the appeal scheme and the host building. For these reasons, I consider that the proposed extension would spoil the intrinsic character and appearance of the appeal property.
6. Notwithstanding the position of No 8 nestled into the space at the end of the private drive, side-on to the access drive and facing open land, the proposal would still draw the eye on the immediate approach to the site as an overly large and unsympathetic addition. Consequently, it would be obtrusive in the street scene to which No 8 belongs and an unwelcome addition to the local area. In reaching this conclusion, I note that the proposed external materials would generally match the existing building.
7. The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) states that planning decisions should not attempt to impose architectural styles or particular tastes and they should not stifle innovation, originality or initiative through unsubstantiated requirements to conform to certain development forms or styles. It is, however, proper to seek to reinforce local distinctiveness and to require good design, which would not be achieved in this instance.
8. The Council raises additional concern that the proposal, if permitted, would set an undesirable precedent for other forward projecting extensions on properties in the local area. The appellant also refers to nearby properties where new front facing gables have been approved. Few details of these cases have been provided and so I am unable to gauge the extent to which these developments directly compare with the proposal before me. In my experience, it is rare that direct parallels can be drawn between individual schemes because local circumstances often vary. In this case, the detailed design of dwellings along Shotwood Close differs, as does the orientation of buildings and relationship to other properties. From what I saw, the particular circumstances of No 8 and the opportunity for an extension along the lines proposed are not replicated elsewhere along Shotwood Close. Moreover, a central principle of the planning system is that each development should be assessed on its own merits, which I have done in this instance. Consequently, I am not persuaded that the proposal would necessarily set a precedent as the Council suggests or that the schemes to which the appellant has referred add significant weight to her case.
9. The main house would screen the proposed extension in views from the CA and so there would be no discernable effect on the setting of this designated heritage asset. I see no reason why uPVC windows in the new extension, with details of their design covered by a condition, would, in themselves, necessarily detract from the character of the host building or the setting of the CA or set an undesirable precedent.
10. Nevertheless, I conclude on the main issue that the proposed development would materially harm the character and appearance of the host building and the local area. Accordingly, it is contrary to Strategic Policy 24 and Detailed Policy 1 of the East Staffordshire Local Plan. These policies require development proposals to achieve high quality design and to positively

contribute to the local area by, amongst other things, reinforcing local character. It is also at odds with the East Staffordshire Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document, which requires extensions to be sensitive to and harmonious with the original building. The National Planning Policy Framework also states that development should respond to local character and add to the overall qualities of an area, with which the proposal would conflict.

11. The proposal would make efficient use of the appeal property and provide additional living accommodation that would improve the living conditions of the appellant and her family. A good-sized garden would remain with the new built form in place. Due to the orientation of the appeal dwelling and its relationship to adjacent properties a rear extension may or may not be problematic. I also share the Council's opinion that there would be no significant harm caused to the living conditions of others. However, these considerations do not outweigh the significant harm that I have identified.
12. The appellant states that a compromise would be considered with regard to the ridgeline height, width and length of the proposed extension to achieve conditional approval. However, my remit is to determine the appeal on the basis of the development that was refused planning permission.
13. Reference is made to the Rolleston on Dove Neighbourhood Plan (NP). Copies of the submission version of this document and a report by an Independent Examiner have been provided. From the evidence before me, the NP does not yet form part of the development plan nor does it form any part of the Council's objection to the proposal. There is nothing in the NP or the Examiners Report that dissuades me from my findings in relation to the main issue or from my conclusion that planning permission should be withheld for the reasons given.

Conclusion

14. Overall, for the reasons set out above, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Gary Deane

INSPECTOR