
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 3 April 2017

by Chris Couper BA (Hons) DiP TP MRTPI

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

Decision date: 26 April 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/X1925/D/17/3168666

17 Parthia Close, Royston, Hertfordshire SG8 9HD

- 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 T Brook against the decision of North Hertfordshire District Council.
 - The application ref:16/02447/1HH, dated 23 September 2016, was refused by notice dated 5 December 2016.
 - The development proposed is alterations and a first floor extension.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for alterations and a first floor extension at 17 Parthia Close, Royston, Hertfordshire SG8 9HD in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref 16/02447/1HH, dated 23 September 2016, subject to the following conditions:
 - 1) The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than three years from the date of this decision.
 - 2) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: drawing nos. 510/16/01, 510/16/02 and 510/16/03.
 - 3) The materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of the development hereby permitted shall match those used in the existing building.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the host property and the area.

Reasons

3. In common with many of the properties on this estate, those on Parthia Close are arranged in semi-detached pairs, and are set back from the highway behind driveways and gardens. The pairs are staggered relative to their neighbours, and there are often gaps, particularly at first floor level, between them.
4. No. 17 forms one half of a semi-detached pair. It has a single storey side extension which abuts the boundary with its non-attached neighbour at no. 19,

although a driveway ensures that there is a visual gap to that dwelling. Its attached neighbour at no. 15 has also been extended to the side. That extension is much taller, has a long front-facing sloping roof, and its ridge is just below the main ridge line of this pair.

5. The proposal would result in the gap at first floor between nos. 17 and 19 being reduced. However, the proposal's ridge would be well below the host property's, and would be set significantly further back; and its eaves line to the front would be at ground floor level. As a result, although the scheme would contain a first floor with a dormer window, viewed from the front it would have a limited mass, which would be significantly less than a more typical two storey development. The pitch of its roof would match the host property, as would its facing materials, and its form would make it appear clearly subordinate. That form, the gap to no. 19 due to that property's driveway, and the staggered siting of many of the dwellings in Parthia Close, would ensure that the proposal would not have a significant terracing effect in the streetscene.
6. I have no evidence that no. 19's occupiers intend to build on their driveway. Even if they do, this scheme's form and articulation should mitigate against any potential terracing effect. Given that conclusion, and the examples of nearby extensions referred to in Appendix 5 of the appellant's statement, some of which abut the side boundary at first floor, this scheme would not set an undesirable precedent.
7. Finally, as this proposal would be broadly similar in height and form to no. 15's extension, this semi-detached pair would take on a more balanced appearance. For all those reasons, I conclude that the proposal would not harm the character and appearance of the host property or the area.
8. Policy 28 of the North Hertfordshire District Local Plan No. 2 with Alterations originally adopted 1996 (2007) sets out, amongst other things, that side extensions adjoining a residential plot to the side will *normally* be refused if, at first floor level or above, there would be less than 1m to the boundary. The policy includes no explanation for that approach. Although this scheme would abut the boundary at first floor level, given its particular form and context no significant harm or significant 'terracing effect' would result. I therefore conclude that there would not be a conflict with the broad thrust of that policy.
9. I have considered the Council's suggested conditions against the tests in the National Planning Policy Framework. In addition to the standard time limit condition, in the interests of certainty, a condition requiring the development to be carried out in accordance with the approved plans is necessary. Finally, in the interests of the character and appearance of the host property and the area, a condition is also necessary requiring it to be faced with matching materials.
10. For the above reasons, I conclude that the scheme would not cause significant harm to the character and appearance of the host property or the area, and having regard to all other matters raised, the appeal is allowed.

Chris Couper

INSPECTOR