
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 26 April 2017

by John Morrison BA (Hons) MSc MRTPI

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

Decision date: 12 May 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/J1535/W/16/3165382
162-164 High Street, Epping CM16 4AQ

- 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 Foxstone Estates Ltd against the decision of Epping Forest District Council.
 - The application Ref EPF/2615/16, dated 5 October 2016, was refused by notice dated 29 November 2016.
 - The development proposed is a single storey 2nd floor roof extension to create a single self-contained dwelling (C3 Use).
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is whether or not the proposed development would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Epping Conservation Area (ECA).

Reasons

3. The appeal site is to the rear of 162-164 High Street and thus obscured from it. Nonetheless it faces south east towards Hemnall Street in a defined wide gap in the street scene. Despite the fact that it is set back from the road frontage, it is highly visible in the public realm. A well-used pedestrian thoroughfare known as Twankhams Alley approaches and passes its southwest elevation.
 4. The proposed development would be read in the context of a number of other rear elevations and buildings that have been developed as back land sites between High Street and Hemnall Street. I accept the appellant's argument that there is a distinct mixed character and appearance to the area around the appeal site. There is a lack of uniformity or formality to the immediate area which displays a variety of architectural types, building heights, external treatments and extensions. Moreover, the extension would replace an existing flat roof section at the rear of the building with a more traditional pitched roof.
 5. However, this would then be dominated by large box type dormer windows on both slopes which would all but expunge the pitched roof detail. In addition, the extension would create a dual pitch to the building's roof which would appear awkward and contrived when viewed from the side elevation, particularly when also taking into account the shape and size of the dormers. Whilst the extension may be subservient when comparing its scale in the
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context of the overall size of the exiting building, by virtue of the above factors it would not be so in visual terms.

6. The proposed development would also include a vertical rectangular timber enclosure of over two storeys in height which would contain a staircase. The height, width and featureless nature of this enclosure would be a further dominating element of the rear elevation. Whilst I accept timber cladding is not an uncommon feature on buildings in the immediate area, its use in the manner proposed would appear stark and oppressive in the street scene.
7. For these reasons, the proposed development would cause harm to the ECA. This harm would be less than substantial which, in accordance with paragraph 134 of the Framework¹, should be weighed against the public benefits. The extension would provide for an additional residential unit, adding to housing stock locally, albeit this addition would be very minor. The accommodation would be in close easy walking distance of a wide variety of services that would meet day to day needs, thus reducing the need to travel. Although this would likely have to be the case to make the proposed development acceptable in any event.
8. When taking these matters together, it is clear to me that the public benefits of the proposed development would not be sufficient to outweigh the harm that it would cause. As a result of the harm that I have found, the extension would not preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the ECA. As well as conflicting with section 12 of the Framework, the proposed development would fail to accord with saved Policies DBE10, HC6 or HC7 of the Local Plan². These Policies and guidance seek to ensure, amongst other things, that high quality design and materials will be required in conservation areas, extensions should, where appropriate, enhance the street scene and the historic environment should be safeguarded from harm.

Conclusion

9. For the above reasons, the appeal is dismissed.

John Morrison

INSPECTOR

¹ The National Planning Policy Framework 2012

² Epping Forest District Local Plan 1998 and Alterations 2006