

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 18 May 2017

by R Barrett BSc (Hons) MSc Dip UD Dip Hist Cons MRTPI IHBC

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

Decision date: 7th June 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/X1925/W/17/3171310

7 Gernon Walk, Letchworth Garden City SG6 3HW

- 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 Davinder Singh against the decision of North Hertfordshire District Council.
 - The application Ref 16/02068/1, dated 12 August 2016, was refused by notice dated 19 December 2016.
 - The development proposed is described as 'single storey rear extension to the existing Sikh temple'.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. Whether the proposed extension would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Letchworth Conservation Area and preserve the setting of 7-17 and 19-25 Lytton Avenue, which are grade II listed buildings.

Reasons

3. The appeal site includes a single storey building currently in use as a Sikh Temple. It has been extended, in the past, with a large rear single storey addition with a flat roof. The building covers almost the full width of the plot and leaves an area of hardsurfacing at the front and rear and limited space for planting, such that, together with its front wall, it appears rather more urban than other properties in the area.
 4. The character and appearance of the Conservation Area includes a planned layout of attractive development, set out in a landscaped setting, in accordance with Garden City principles and 'group design'. This includes the picturesque layout and design of buildings, which are grouped together to form a sequence of outdoor spaces and related to each other and the overall setting. Generally properties include large front and rear gardens, green spaces and trees and planting, both in private and public open spaces, such that the Conservation Area has a spacious, green and verdant character and appearance. Boundary treatments are generally low level walls, picket fences, hedges and trees, which together with the rural cottage design of dwellings, gives the Conservation Area a semi-rural feel. High quality design and the use of a limited palette of mainly natural materials, result in a cohesive feel.
 5. The short terrace of listed buildings at 7-17 and 19-25 Lytton Avenue comprise cottages of a similar ilk to one another, with rendered elevations and
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prominent pitched roofs. They are set out in a planned arrangement, with one terrace set forward of the other behind a green space. They have long rear gardens and planting which contribute to their spacious, green and semi-rural landscaped setting.

6. The proposed extension would result in more development on this limited plot and less open space to the rear of the existing building, such that it would appear cramped. This would detract from the spacious qualities of the Conservation Area. It would diminish the opportunities for planting at its rear, which would erode the green and verdant qualities of the Conservation Area. Further, its flat roof, even though it would replicate that on the existing building, would fail to reflect the generally pitched roofed development seen locally. The general design and detailing, including the roof, window and door details, fail to duplicate the high quality design and attention to detail seen elsewhere in the Conservation Area. All in all, for all these reasons, the appeal development would fail to preserve the special qualities of the Conservation Area that I have identified.
7. As the proposed addition would be some distance from the listed properties in Lytton Avenue and separated by a wall and some planting, no material harm would result to the setting of those listed buildings.
8. In coming to these findings I have had regard to the conclusions of my Colleague in allowing an appeal for an extension at the appeal site¹. However, that appeal was some time ago, and the appeal site has been extended since then. My conclusions, however, accord with those of another Inspector in dismissing an appeal for a covered seating area in the rear garden.²
9. I conclude that the appeal development would preserve the setting of the listed buildings identified. It would, in this regard, generally accord with North Hertfordshire District Local Plan No. 2 with Alterations (1996) Policy 58. However, for all the reasons given, it would fail to preserve the character and appearance of the Letchworth Conservation Area. For this reason, it would be contrary to LP Policy 58, which aims for development in Letchworth Garden City to reflect the Garden City Principles.

Public Benefits

10. In accordance with paragraph 132 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework), I accord great weight to the conservation of designated heritage assets. I consider that the harm to the significance of the Conservation Area would be less than substantial, a matter to which I attach considerable importance and weight. However, in this case, no public benefits, as identified in paragraph 134 of the Framework, are before me, sufficient to outweigh that harm. In coming to this conclusion, I have had regard to the provision of enhanced accommodation for a community use.

Other Matters

11. I have noted the concern of local residents with regard to noise and disturbance amongst other matters. However, on the basis of my previous findings I have no reason to consider these further.

¹ APP/X1925/A/84/14595

² APP/X1925/A/91/194118

Conclusion

12. For the above reasons, and taking all other matters raised into consideration, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

R Barrett

INSPECTOR