
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 22 May 2017

by David Cross BA (Hons), PGDip, MRTPI

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

Decision date: 7 June 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/X1355/D/17/3166751

Stengarth, High Street, Low Pittington DH6 1BE

- 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 Steven Pratt against the decision of Durham County Council.
 - The application Ref DM/16/03328/FPA, dated 4 October 2016, was refused by notice dated 13 December 2016.
 - The development proposed is extension above existing garage and conversion of garage to form habitable room to form annexe to dwelling.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for extension above existing garage and conversion of garage to form habitable room to form annexe to dwelling at Stengarth, High Street, Low Pittington DH6 1BE in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref DM/16/03328/FPA, dated 4 October 2016, and the plans submitted with it, subject to the following conditions:
 - 1) The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than 3 years from the date of this decision.
 - 2) 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.
 - 3) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: untitled location plan scale 1:1250; plan titled "Proposed Extension at Stengarth, High Pittington Durham for Mr Mrs Pratt".

Procedural Matter

2. I note that Council Officers sought confirmation from the appellant with regard to the formation of a potentially separate residential dwelling. The Council Officer's report states that no response on this matter was received and that the Council proceeded to assess the proposal as being accommodation associated with the host dwelling. For the avoidance of doubt, I have also determined this appeal on the basis that the proposal would be accommodation associated with the host dwelling.
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Main Issue

3. The main issue in this appeal is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the host property and the surrounding area.

Reasons

4. The appeal site consists of a large detached two storey dwelling with a double garage located in a ground floor annexe to the side. The proposal would extend over the annexe and convert the garage to living accommodation. The extension would use the same footprint of the garage annexe which would result in the upper floor being flush with the main front wall of the host dwelling, although the front elevation would be broken up by a porch and a two-storey gable offshoot. The roof would also continue the ridge line and roof slopes of the main gable roof of the dwelling. The proposal would result in a first floor extension projecting a significant distance to the side above the garage. This would represent a fundamental change in the character and appearance of the property, from a typical albeit relatively large modern detached dwelling, to a much more substantial dwelling of a linear form extending along the street.
5. In support of the proposal, the appellant has referred to a number of other properties in the vicinity of the site which share these characteristics. I saw that there is a significant variation in the design and scale of dwellings along High Street. This includes dwellings of a similar scale as the proposal and which are also of a linear form extending along the street, including relatively modern dwellings, older traditional dwellings and residential conversions. The overall impression is of a varied street scene which does not have a defined rhythm or a predominant building style.
6. I acknowledge that the proposal would be an extension of significant bulk and massing which would not be subordinate to the host dwelling. It would also be readily visible from the public realm along High Street. However, due to the context of varying building forms described above, including a number of substantial dwellings which have similar characteristics to the appeal proposal, I consider that the proposal would not appear as an incongruous or unsympathetic addition to the host dwelling. For the same reasons, the proposal would not be intrusive within the street scene.
7. I conclude that the proposal would not harm the character and appearance of the host dwelling or the street scene. It would therefore not conflict with Saved Policy Q9 of the City of Durham Local Plan 2004 which states, amongst other things, that extensions to residential properties will be permitted provided that the design, scale and materials are sympathetic to the main dwelling and the character and appearance of the area. The proposal would also not conflict with the provisions of the National Planning Policy Framework in respect of requiring good design.
8. I conclude that the appeal should succeed and that planning permission is granted subject to conditions that are necessary for the avoidance of doubt and to safeguard the character and appearance of the area.

David Cross

INSPECTOR