

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 14 June 2017

by John Morrison BA (Hons) MSc MRTPI

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

Decision date: 4th July 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/C1950/D/17/3172892

95 Hatfield Road, Little Heath, Potters Bar, Herts EN16 1HZ

- 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 S Flowerdew against the decision of Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 6/2016/2716/HOUSE, dated 19 December 2016, was refused by notice dated 28 February 2017.
 - The development proposed is described as 'proposed two storey side extension; loft conversion to include loft extension; front porch and extension to frontage garage store. The construction of dormer windows.'
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for 'proposed two storey side extension; loft conversion to include loft extension; front porch and extension to frontage garage store and the construction of dormer windows' at 95 Hatfield Road, Little Heath, Potters Bar, Herts EN16 1HZ in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref 6/2016/2716/HOUSE, dated 19 December 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 plan; drawing number 1538.02A, dated 14/12/2016.
 - 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.

Procedural Matter

2. The proposed development includes a number of alterations to the dwelling. These are referred to in the description of development as it is set out above. My understanding of the evidence leads me to conclude that the Council's main concern is with the proposed first floor side element, described as the two storey extension. I have therefore focussed on this since it is at the heart of the Council's case for the refusal of planning permission.
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Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

4. The appeal site comprises a brick built two storey, semi-detached dwelling. Each consecutive pair of dwellings in the street is linked at ground floor level by abutting single storey garages. In some cases, this results in a regularly occurring double garage width gap at first floor level. In others, this gap is lesser by virtue of a number of side projecting first floor extensions. The street scene shares other commonalities in design and configuration with all but one of the pairs also having a gable feature to the front. A number also benefit from enlarged porches and other alterations to the frontage.
5. These other first floor side projections have retained separation between each pair at first floor level but it has resulted in a spacing that is not uniform. The proposed extension in this case would noticeably reduce the first floor gap between Numbers 95 and 97 Hatfield Road, an effect which would be emphasised by the existence of a similar sideways projection on the latter. This would have the obvious visual effect of bringing the two dwellings, which are linked at ground floor level already, closer together than others.
6. In my view however, this effect stops short of forming a clear terrace. There would still be a gap retained at first floor level and separation would still be clearly legible in the street scene. A narrower gap at first floor level is not an uncommon feature and in this case would not therefore appear alien. Particularly in the context of the varied nature of the first floor gaps in the remainder of the street scene and other frontage alterations. In effect, the size of a first floor gap is not the sole defining characteristic of the street scene and the reduction in its size would not, in this particular case, be harmful.
7. For this and the reasons set out above, I conclude that the proposed development would not cause harm to the character or appearance of the area. As a result, I see no conflict with saved Policies D1 or D2 of the Local Plan¹. These Policies seek to ensure that, amongst other things and along with section 7 of the Framework², new development is of a high quality and contextually appropriate design and appearance which respects local character.
8. I note the Council's reference to saved Policy GBSP2 of the Local Plan as well as their Supplementary Planning Guidance from 2005. In terms of the former, this Policy relates mostly to the towns and settlements specified that are excluded from the Green Belt and to where new development should be focussed. Being within one of the specified settlements the proposed development would comply but given its nature and scale I would consider the policy to be of secondary relevance to the main issue at play. Notwithstanding the sufficiency of saved Policies D1 and D2. With regard to the latter, I have not been provided with a copy in the evidence.

¹ Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005

² The National Planning Policy Framework 2012

Conditions

9. In the interests of certainty I have referred to the approved plan as well as imposing the standard time condition. In order to secure an appropriate external appearance to the extensions I have set out that their external materials shall match the existing dwelling.

Conclusion

10. For the reasons and subject to the conditions set out in the above schedule, the appeal is allowed.

John Morrison

INSPECTOR