

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 18 September 2017

by Patrick Whelan BA(Hons) Dip Arch MA MSc ARB RIBA RTPI

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

Decision date: 29 September 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/G2245/D/17/3179433

Keyworth, Hopgarden Lane, Sevenoaks TN13 1PU

- 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 & Mrs Williams against the decision of Sevenoaks District Council.
 - The application Ref SE/17/01236/HOUSE, dated 13 April 2017, was refused by notice dated 8 June 2017.
 - The development proposed is described as garage to be demolished and rebuild on footprint of existing garage, with side extension and new habitable area at the first floor. New porch between existing house and new garage, with rooflights.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

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

Reasons

3. The Council's Core Strategy 2011 (CS) and its Allocations and Development Management Plan 2015 (ADMP) contain several design policies. CS policy SP1 and ADMP policy EN1 seek high quality design which respects the character of the site and which takes account of guidance in local Character Area Assessments. The Council's Residential Character Area Assessment Supplementary Planning Document 2012 (SPD) is material. It identifies locally distinctive features and highlights the fragile balance between the landscape and built form as well as pressures to redevelop garages.
 4. It sets out a number of design criteria for development in the Hopgarden Lane Area. It suggests that garage developments should be of a scale, form, materials and location that fit unobtrusively with the house, surrounding garden and the street scene. This is reiterated in the Residential Extensions Supplementary Planning Document 2009, which suggests that garages and outbuildings should be smaller in scale, and should appear ancillary to the house.
 5. Keyworth is set on rising ground with the present garage standing close to it at its high point. At this point, the roof of the house sweeps relatively low opposite the garage. In this context, development above the eaves level of the house is likely to have a bearing on the balance between the massing of the house as it cuts into the hillside, and its distinctive character in relation to the topography, spaciousness and landscape setting of the site.
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6. The proposed building would be close to the house and well screened from the boundary and the street scene by tall, evergreen trees and hedges. Its footprint would be similar to the existing garage, and its overall height would be lower than the house. The height of its front eaves would match those of the house, which would retain the hierarchical order of buildings. It would use similar materials. These elements of the proposal are sensitive to the massing of the house, its scale, and its balance in the landscape.
7. Notwithstanding this, in its sloping setting, the simple, low-pitched, gable-ended roof of the house makes a significant contribution to the spaciousness of the site. The large, box form of the roof of the proposal, with a flat top, steep slopes and distinctly unequal eaves heights would reflect little of the order and distinguishing design of the house. Its incongruence would undermine the architectural character of the house and the contribution it makes to the landscape setting of the site.
8. I acknowledge the unimplemented planning permission for a garage. However, unlike this proposal, its roof form was sensitive to the house. Moreover, as it substantially pre-dates the development plan and the Character Area Assessment, the weight I can accord it is limited. In any event, I have taken into account the rising ground and enclosure to the rear and side of the proposal. While this would limit the direct bearing of the proposal on the area to the north and west, its conspicuous impact on the house, the site and its overall contribution to the area would remain.
9. I have taken into account that the proposal would be set beyond the east elevation of the house and that it would be linked by a single storey structure. However, it would be set on higher ground and, by its oblique orientation the incongruity of its roof would be prominent. Its link from the house would not break-up its mass, shift its bulk, or make it appear sub-ordinate. Rather, filling the gap would reduce its discreteness and amplify its mass.
10. The proposed development would therefore harm the character and appearance of the area. It would be in conflict with CS policy SP1 and ADMP policy EN1. Nor would it accord with the National Planning Policy Framework (paragraph 58) which says that development should respond to local character and reflect the identity of local surroundings. It would also be contrary to the Planning Practice Guidance¹ which advises that local building forms contribute to the distinctive qualities of a place, and that development should seek to promote character in townscape by responding to and reinforcing locally distinctive patterns of development.

Conclusion

11. Whilst the development would provide additional living space, this is outweighed by the harm to the character and appearance of the area and the clear conflict with the policies of the development plan. For the reasons given above, and taking account of all matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Patrick Whelan

INSPECTOR

¹ Paragraph:007, reference ID 26-007-20140306