
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 18 September 2019

by I A Dyer BSc (Eng) MIHT

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 23 September 2019

Appeal Ref: APP/J1915/D/19/3228954
14, Rib Vale, Bengeo, Hertford SG14 3LF

- 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 Jeff Andrews against the decision of East Hertfordshire District Council.
 - The application Ref 3/19/0254/HH, dated 7 February 2019, was refused by notice dated 29 March 2019.
 - The development proposed is two storey side/rear, single storey rear extension and alterations.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matters

2. The application was made by Mr Jeff Andrews; however, the appeal was submitted by Mr and Mrs L Treadwell, who have, in an email dated 15 July 2019, confirmed that they are both the occupiers and owners of the property. I have considered the appeal on this basis.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the site and the surrounding area.

Reasons

Character and appearance

4. Rib Vale is a residential street fronted by two storey detached and semi-detached dwellings. The buildings form groups of dwellings of the same style and design and, from the street, the dwellings appear to be largely unaltered within their groupings. Whilst both detached and semi-detached dwellings have garages at ground floor level, usually set back behind the building line, there are substantial gaps at first floor level creating a strong rhythm of development and giving a feeling of spaciousness to the area. These are positive features that contribute to the character and appearance of the street scene.
5. 14 Rib Vale has an existing modest extension to the rear, on the boundary with 12 Rib Vale and reflected in a similar extension on No 12. The proposal demolishes this extension and an existing garage, one of a pair of semi-detached garages. These structures would be replaced with an extension with a much greater footprint that would wrap around the side and rear of the

dwelling structure, extending some distance to the rear and almost filling the width of the plot. The extension would include a significant two storey element to the side and rear of the existing dwelling. The proposed extension would be much greater in mass and volume than the combined structures that it replaces.

6. The two storey element would significantly reduce the gap between 14 and 16 Rib Vale. This would interrupt the rhythm of development and reduce the sense of spaciousness. Given the importance that I have placed on the rhythm of gaps and buildings to the character and appearance of the area, and the sense of spaciousness created by the gaps, the reduction in the gap would be out of character and incongruous with the form of existing development when viewed from the street
7. The rear element has a complex roof form, with a pair of hipped roofs, which does not correlate in style to any of the existing rear roof forms and so would be out of keeping when viewed from the adjacent rear gardens.
8. Whilst the ridge and eaves height of the proposed side element of the extension would be substantially lower than that of the existing roof to which the development is attached, providing a degree of visual subservience to the main dwelling, the overall bulk and size of the proposed extension would undermine this intent. The front and gabled flank of the development would be clearly visible from the street and the difference in heights between the proposed ridge and that on the existing structure would introduce a step in the block which would be at odds with the existing form of buildings in the area, which have a uniform ridge height for each structure. The difference in eaves heights would noticeably alter the overall character of the rooflines in the area. In this particular context that lack of conformity would be so significant as to amount to harm.
9. The overall scale of the proposed extension would add very significantly to the side and rear of the existing dwelling, unbalancing the pair of semi detached dwellings and creating a dwelling of a scale that is out of keeping with that of other dwellings in the vicinity. This would be clearly visible from the street and the gardens to the rear of the neighbouring properties and introduce a discordance within the grouping that would amount to harm.
10. Whilst No 16 has been extended to the rear to a similar distance behind the dwelling, this extension is a single storey and does not encroach into the sideway, and so does not result in a reduction of the gap between the dwellings at first floor level. It has been brought to my attention that the permission for this extension also has a first floor element, but, at the time of my site visit, only a ground floor extension was present, and I cannot be sure that the second storey will be built. I have limited information before me regarding the development at No 16 upon which to form a comparison to the proposal before me. However, from the information on the plan provided by the appellants, even were the second storey element of that extension to be added in that form at a later date, the structure would not encroach into the driveway area.
11. I conclude that the proposal would result in harm to the character and appearance of the site and the surrounding area contrary to policies HOU11 and DES4 of the East Herts District Plan 2018 (the District Plan) which, amongst other things, require that development should reflect and promote local distinctiveness and reflect the character of the surrounding area in terms

of scale, massing and design features; and that extensions should generally appear as a subservient addition to the dwelling. The proposal is also contrary to the aims set out in Paragraph 130 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2019 in that the proposed development fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area.

Other Matters

12. In support of the appeal, my attention was drawn to other properties in the wider area that have already been extended or received planning permission for two storey extensions. The existence of these does not justify the harm I have identified nor does the lack of objection from neighbours or other consultees. In any case, I have determined the appeal on its own merits.

Conclusion

13. For the reasons given above, and having regard to all other matters raised, the appeal is dismissed.

I Dyer

INSPECTOR