The Planning Inspectorate

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 8 October 2019

by A Denby BA(Hons) DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 01 November 2019

Appeal Ref: APP/J1915/D/19/3233289
Round House Lodge, High Oak Road, Ware, SG12 7PR

- 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 Harris & Ms Markham against the decision of East Hertfordshire District Council.
- The application Ref 3/19/0527/HH, dated 8 March 2019, was refused by notice dated 9 May 2019.
- The development proposed is conversion of attic, extension of roof space, introduction of dormers and changes to fenestration.

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the host dwelling and surrounding area.

Reasons

3. The site is located on the fringe of the existing urban area and is within a relatively isolated position, set back from the main road. The appeal property consists of a detached single storey dwelling, which has a single storey flat roof element linking to a garage. The main part of the dwelling has a simplistic form with an almost square footprint, low eaves and a substantial hipped roof, which is the predominant feature of the existing building.

4. Although set back from the main road the dwelling is clearly visible through the gap created by the access to the site and the Roundhouse; and from the adjacent bridleway. It is a prominent feature when viewed from the frontage and due to its siting, at the junction of the access and bridleway, it appears as a gatehouse, nestled into the landscape. It does therefore have its own individual character and streetscene, which contrasts with the more compact, urban form of the existing development to the south. It is however acknowledged that broader views of the frontage are tempered by existing landscaping.

5. The rear garden area is at a higher ground level than the existing dwelling, with ground levels rising further to the north beyond the site boundary. Considering this, and the existing planting at the site and in the surrounding area, the rear of the dwelling is not as prominent. Any views are generally glimpsed through this planting, though there would be more open views from

the field to the rear and driveway to the Roundhouse. However, where there are views to the site it is the existing roof which is the most visible.

6. The proposed dormers to the front elevation, due to their size, in particular their width and height, would dominate the existing property. When viewed from the front, the dormers would visually occupy much of the existing front roof slope and, with their glazed elements being similar in size to those on the existing dwelling, would also compete visually with the host property, even though the footprint of the dwelling would not be amended, and the dormers would incorporate traditional hipped roofs, utilise matching materials and have shallower cheeks.

7. Accordingly, the front dormers would alter the existing character and appearance of the dwelling, and rather than blend in, or break-up the expanse of the roof, they would be overly dominant features, detracting from its original size and form. Their balanced composition would also therefore be lessened as they would be prominent and incongruous additions.

8. The dormer proposed to the rear roof slope is of a more contemporary design, incorporating larger sections of glazing and a metal curved roof. It would not resemble an eyebrow dormer, which generally do not have cheeks, and would therefore visually be more intrusive. Whilst it is acknowledged that the appeal scheme includes other elements of contemporary design, due to the existing higher ground level to the rear, these would not be read in conjunction with the dormer window.

9. From the surrounding area this dormer would be viewed in the context of the more traditional roof form. Considering its size, design and materials the rear dormer would, visually, be at odds with the established character of the host property and be a dominant and incongruous addition.

10. The proposed development would, therefore, have an unacceptable harmful effect on the character and appearance of the host dwelling and surrounding area. Consequently, in that regard, it would be contrary to Policy DES4 of the East Hertfordshire District Plan 2018 (DP) which seeks to ensure that developments are of a high standard of design. It would also not accord with Policy HOU11 of the DP which requires developments to be of a size, scale, mass, form, siting, design and materials that are appropriate to the character, appearance and setting of the existing dwelling; and with specific regard to roof dormers, be of limited extent and modest proportions so as not to dominate the existing roof form.

Other matters

11. The appellant has drawn my attention to other developments in the Great Amwell area that have incorporated dormer windows. Whilst I am mindful of the details submitted, there are none which appear to be directly comparable to the appeal scheme when considering the size and siting of the proposed dormer windows, and the size and design of the host dwelling.

12. Furthermore, I do not know the full circumstances of those schemes, and in any event, each case must be considered on its own merits. It is acknowledged that the site is not within the Green Belt or a conservation area and would not affect the listed Roundhouse building, though this does not affect my consideration of the visual impacts of the proposal which, as detailed above,

would result in harm to the character and appearance of the host dwelling and surrounding area.

13. I note the appellants comments that the existing roof is in poor condition and offers poor insulation value. Whilst the development may have some benefit in respect of thermal efficiency and upkeep of the building, there is little evidence before me to demonstrate that the appeal scheme is the only way to achieve this. The appellant has also provided details of discussions they have had with the Council post decision. However, my decision is based on the scheme before me and these other matters do not, therefore, lead me to a different conclusion.

Conclusion

14. For the reasons given above, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

A Denby

INSPECTOR