
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 27 November 2019

by J Bowyer BSc(Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 3rd December 2019

Appeal Ref: APP/N1540/D/19/3236324
109 Herons Wood, Harlow, Essex CM20 1RT

- 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 Neo against the decision of Harlow District Council.
 - The application Ref HW/HSE/19/00244, dated 20 June 2019, was refused by notice dated 1 August 2019.
 - The development proposed is a single storey rear extension and first floor side extension and alterations.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for a single storey rear extension and first floor side extension and alterations at 109 Herons Wood, Harlow, Essex CM20 1RT in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref HW/HSE/19/00244, dated 20 June 2019, subject to the following conditions:
 - 1) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: 19037/1, 19037/2 and 19037/3A.
 - 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 in accordance with the materials shown on plan no. 19037/3A.

Procedural Matter

2. At the time of my visit, construction works were ongoing on the appeal site to implement a single storey rear extension. Given the stage reached, I cannot be certain that this is consistent in all respects with the rear extension that is part of the development now proposed. However, I have in any case determined the appeal on the basis of the development shown on the plans before me.

Main Issue

3. The main issue in this appeal is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the existing dwelling and the surrounding area.

Reasons

4. Herons Wood comprises a series of relatively narrow residential streets which accommodate a mix of predominantly terraced and detached dwellings of similar designs. The appeal site contains an end of terrace dwelling located on a corner plot. The dwelling is part of a terraced run characterised by pitched roof forms and an irregular arrangement to the first floor windows, and by

linking sections between dwellings which project forward of the main dwelling at ground floor but which are recessed at first floor level. For the main part, the dwellings are finished in brick although the recessed sections and full height vertical sections of the front elevations are typically finished in contrasting pale coloured render or white horizontal boarding.

5. The terrace is not uniform; in particular 103 Herons Wood has a two storey front projection and the recessed first floor part of 104 Herons Wood has been partly infilled. Nevertheless, the alterations do not disrupt the overall rhythm and together with the height of the dwellings which step up in response to land levels towards the appeal site, there is a distinctive articulation to the terrace.
6. Saved Policy BE1 of the Replacement Harlow Local Plan 2006 (RHLP) requires that development relates to its setting to strengthen, enhance, protect or create local character. It includes, amongst other things, requirements that development has an appropriate visual relationship with the surrounding area and that design is specific to a site and its context, respecting whilst not necessarily replicating local characteristics. The Harlow Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document 2011 (DGSPD) provides further guidance and advises that proposals for extensions should be well integrated with and visually subservient to the existing dwelling, and that windows should generally match those of the existing dwelling.
7. The Council have not raised any concerns over the proposed single storey rear extension, and from the evidence before me and my visit I see no reason this would cause any harm to the character or appearance of the dwelling or area.
8. Turning to the proposed first floor side extension, I note that the dwelling on the appeal site includes a recessed section. However, this faces the side boundary of the site with the street rather than adjoining a neighbouring dwelling and forming a link. The proposed side extension would align with the main wall to the rear of No. 109, and would partly infill the existing recessed section to the front of the dwelling.
9. Given the location of the site, the development would be readily visible from the street scene. Nevertheless, while the depth of the inset would be reduced, the extension would remain set back from the main front elevation of the dwelling and the roof would be set down from the main ridgeline. In these ways, the proposal would be subservient to the host property and would not be an overly bulky or disproportionate addition. Furthermore, the plans indicate that the walls of the extension would be finished in white painted render. The degree of the set back proposed from the front elevation of the dwelling would be sufficient to ensure a legible distinction, and together with the set down to the roof and the contrasting material the characteristic articulation to the terrace would be maintained.
10. While I saw that some other dwellings on nearby corner plots do include truncated first floor sections, this is by no means a uniform characteristic of the area which would be eroded by the proposed development and indeed is not a feature of the other end of the terrace that the appeal site is part of. Moreover, although the development would be visible from the street scene, the extension would be of lesser width than the existing first floor and would remain set in significantly from the boundary to the side of the site with the adjacent part of Herons Wood with a generous garden retained to the rear of the dwelling. In this regard, the development would not be disproportionate to the appeal site

and the proposal would not be an overly prominent or incongruous feature in the street scene.

11. The Council are also concerned that the window proposed to the front of the extension would be excessively large and that it would not be sympathetic to, or line up with, the existing windows. However, it would reflect the scale and proportions of other windows to the rear of the dwelling and would be set well in from the sides and base of the rendered elevation in which it would be positioned. It would not therefore appear excessive. While the sill would be below the level of that of the adjacent first floor window, the top would align with this window. The irregular placement of first floor windows which are of differing scales is an existing feature of dwellings on Herons Wood, with further variation along the street scene arising from assorted glazing bar designs. In this context, the proposed window would not be jarring or unsympathetic.
12. For the reasons set out above, I therefore conclude that the proposed development would be a proportionate and sympathetic extension and would not cause harm to the character and appearance of either the existing dwelling or the surrounding area. Accordingly, I find no conflict with saved Policy BE1 of the RHLP. The proposal would also comply with the DGSPD and the principles of the National Planning Policy Framework which seeks good design that is sympathetic to local character.

Conditions

13. Given that construction works are ongoing, the standard time limit condition is not necessary. However, I have imposed a condition specifying the approved plans for the avoidance of doubt and in the interest of certainty. A condition regarding the external materials to be used is also necessary in order to ensure a satisfactory appearance. However, given the varied materials to the existing dwelling I have amended the Council's suggested condition to refer to the use of matching materials as shown on the submitted plans for the sake of clarity.
14. The Council have also suggested a condition to require an Arboricultural Method Statement (AMS). However, construction works related to a single storey rear extension were already taking place on site and the proposed side extension would be over the footprint of the existing dwelling. Moreover, there are no significant trees within the appeal site that would be affected by the proposed development. I am not therefore convinced that an AMS is necessary in this case, and so I have not imposed the suggested condition.

Conclusion

15. For the reasons given above, I conclude that the appeal should be allowed.

J Bowyer

INSPECTOR