
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 13 January 2020

by S. Rennie BSc (Hons), BA (Hons), MA, MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 20 February 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/A1910/W/19/3238676

1 Christchurch Road, Hemel Hempstead HP2 5BX

- 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 David Perryman against the decision of Dacorum Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 4/01049/19/FUL, dated 26 April 2019, was refused by notice dated 25 June 2019.
 - The development proposed is the removal of pitched roof structure and erection of mansard roof to provide 2no one bedroom flats at second floor.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The effect of the development on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

3. The building on site has a residential appearance with some traditional architectural features and fronts Christchurch Road. This is a relatively long residential street made up primarily of either terraced or semi-detached houses, with the majority having pitched roofs with either gables or hipped sides.
4. The proposal would result in the removal of the existing shallow pitched roof with hipped gables and replace it with a mansard roof. This would allow for more space within the roof void and provide for two additional flats.
5. The existing building does have some traditional features such as the bay window, with the appearance of No 1 fitting in well with the prevailing traditional character of dwellings along Christchurch Road. However, the addition of a large and bulky mansard roof would appear an incongruous feature to add onto this dwelling within the Christchurch Road street scene, replacing the more traditional pitched roof. Within Christchurch Road, other than one example (at 41 Christchurch Road), is typified by pitched roofs for dwellings. Furthermore, this is a particularly prominent property being on a corner plot on the entrance to this street.
6. Furthermore, whilst it may not add significantly to the overall height of the building and could be constructed with appropriate materials, the mansard roof

- of the scale and mass proposed would appear incompatible with the traditional character of the existing building, where a pitched roof would be more typical.
7. No 1 Christchurch Road does have a secondary frontage onto Alexandra Road as the site is on a corner plot. This is a road where there is more of a mix and variety of style of building, including blocks of flats such as those at Iveagh Court. These flats have a flat roof but appears as a large mansard roof. However, these are a large block of flats and very different in character to No 1 Christchurch Road. This is also the case for the apartment block at Alex Court nearby on Alexandra Road.
 8. Even along Alexandra Road, most houses or other forms of dwellings which are not large blocks of flats have pitched roofs and not mansard type roofs. An exception is 11-13 Alexandra Road, which is a redeveloped two storey building with a mansard roof, which has been recently approved by the Council with planning permission and now built. However, the setting for No 11-13 is not the same as No 1 Christchurch Road, which has its primary frontage on Christchurch Road. No 11-13 does not have any frontage on Christchurch Road and instead is positioned further to the north along Alexandra Road adjacent to a car park and mainly surrounded by flats and office development of varied design. I also do not have full details of what existed before the development and the Council's full reasons why this was given planning permission. Notwithstanding this, whilst close by there are clear differences between the character of the setting of these two buildings, particularly considering that I regard the character of Christchurch Road to be particularly important to the setting of the appeal site.
 9. I acknowledge the lack of objection to the proposal including the design and scale of the mansard roof from local residents. However, this does not necessarily mean they support the proposal, although I have taken the lack of objection into consideration.
 10. Overall, the proposal is harmful to the character and appearance of the area and is contrary to criteria (f) of policy CS12 (Quality of Development) of the Dacorum Borough Core Strategy. This policy, amongst other things, requires development to integrate with the streetscape character.
 11. I also regard the proposal to be contrary to the relevant sections of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) which states that permission should be refused for development of poor design that fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area and the way it functions (paragraph 130).
 12. However, I do not conclude, based on the evidence before me, that the proposal is in particular conflict with criteria (c) of policy CS11 (Quality of Neighbourhood Design) of the Core Strategy, which relates to co-ordinating streetscape design between character areas.

Planning Balance

13. The Council has acknowledged that it cannot demonstrate a 5 year housing land supply. Paragraph 11 of the Framework sets out that decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development and that, under criterion d) where the policies which are most important for determining the application are out of date, planning permission should be granted unless any

adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits when assessed against the policies in the Framework taken as a whole. Given the lack of a five year housing land supply, paragraph 11 d) of the Framework is engaged.

14. In the context of the development plan I have found that the proposed development would be contrary to policy CS12 of the Dacorum Borough Core Strategy. For this appeal, I have found this policy to be generally consistent with the relevant aims of the Framework.
15. I recognise that the proposal would boost housing demand in an accessible location, which would be a form of efficient use of 'brownfield' land. However, as only two dwellings would be created the benefits would be modest. The fact that there has been no objection raised to other issues such as impact to neighbour living conditions or highway safety are neutral factors and do not weigh in favour for the proposal.
16. However, the harm to the character and appearance of the area identified would be significant and as a result sustainable development would not be achieved. When assessed against the policies in the Framework taken as a whole the adverse impacts would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits. The conflict with the development plan is not outweighed by other considerations including the Framework.

Conclusion

17. For the reasons given above, the appeal is dismissed.

S. Rennie

INSPECTOR