
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 19 May 2020 by Emma Worby BSc (Hons) MSc

Decision by Andrew Owen BA (Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 27 May 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/X1925/D/19/3243151

65 Spring Road, Letchworth Garden City SG6 3SL

- 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 Mrs Jenna Selby against the decision of North Hertfordshire District Council.
 - The application Ref 19/02017/FPH, dated 21 August 2019, was refused by notice dated 7 October 2019.
 - The development proposed is a 2 storey side extension and single storey front porch.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Appeal Procedure

2. The site visit was undertaken by an Appeals Planning Officer whose recommendation is set out below and to which the Inspector has had regard before deciding the appeal.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the host pair of semi-detached dwellings and the Letchworth Conservation Area.

Reasons for the Recommendation

4. The appeal site accommodates a two-storey semi-detached dwelling located within the Letchworth Conservation Area (the Conservation Area), which is a designated heritage asset. Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as amended, requires that special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a Conservation Area.
5. The significance of the Conservation Area relates to the architecture, the layout of development and its relation to the garden city movement, as the first of its kind. The appeal site forms part of the garden city, as part of the group of semi-detached and terraced houses for industrial workers with open spaces between dwellings and large corner plots, and makes a positive contribution to the significance of the Conservation Area. The location of the appeal site on a corner plot with West View and opposite a junction with Broadwater Avenue makes it highly visible within the surrounding area.

6. The design of the proposed extension has been stepped down from the ridge and stepped in from the front elevation of the main dwelling. However its disproportionate width, of over 4 metres, would not appear subservient in the context of the original dwelling. Furthermore, the positioning of the dormer on the front elevation, which would not match the positioning of the existing dormer on the front elevation, would not appear sympathetic in design. It is noted that a side facing gable has been used to match that of the neighbouring property, No.102 West View, but this would not detract from the overly large and imposing nature of the proposed extension, which would be particularly visible in this corner plot location.
7. The attached neighbouring dwelling, No.67 Spring Road, is not entirely symmetrical in appearance to the appeal property, with an existing porch and a small single-storey side extension. However, the large two-storey proposal would have a greater impact on the appearance of the pair of semi-detached properties and would be detrimental to their joint positive impact on the streetscene. Although the side elevations of each dwelling are not seen together, the proposal would be highly visible from the front, where any form of existing symmetry would be significantly disrupted.
8. The area of land to the side of the host dwelling, where the proposal is to be located, is large and spacious. Although the proposed side extension would not occupy all of this land, it would still appear overly large in size when compared to the original dwelling. The side extension would reduce the open nature of this corner plot and the modest appearance of the original dwelling, to the detriment of the wider Conservation Area.
9. I conclude that the development fails to preserve the character and appearance of the host pair of semi-detached dwellings and the Letchworth Conservation Area. Therefore, it conflicts with Policy 28 of the North Hertfordshire District Council Local Plan (2007), Policies D2 and HE1 of the North Hertfordshire District Council Emerging Local Plan 2011-2031 (2016), along with the design objectives of the National Planning Policy Framework. These seek to ensure extensions to dwellings are sympathetic to the existing house and that proposals affecting designated heritage assets preserve its significance.
10. The harm found is relatively small scale in the wider context of the entire Conservation Area and therefore, having regard to the Framework, the harm to the significance of the Letchworth Conservation Area is less than substantial. The Framework requires, where there would be less than substantial harm, for it to be balanced against the public benefits of the scheme.
11. Although the appellant indicates that the proposal would enhance the viability of the dwelling to meet modern needs, it is not considered that the proposed extension is necessary to achieve this. Therefore, this can only be given minimal weight. I also acknowledge the appellant's were expecting another child and that the proposal would provide more space for them. However such personal circumstances carry little weight and are not a public benefit. Therefore, the public benefits of the scheme do not outweigh the less than substantial harm to the heritage asset previously identified.

Other Matters

12. It is noted that first stage approval has been granted by the Garden City Heritage Foundation for the proposed development. However this is a separate

matter from the application for planning permission and would not impact upon my conclusion.

Conclusions and Recommendation

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

Emma Worby

APPEALS PLANNING OFFICER

Inspector's Decision

14. I have considered all the submitted evidence and the Appeal Planning Officer's report and on that basis the appeal is dismissed.

Andrew Owen

INSPECTOR