
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 2 June 2020

by Benjamin Clarke BA (Hons.) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 12th June 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/X1925/D/19/3229471

201 Stevenage Road, Hitchin, Hertfordshire SG4 9EA

- 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 Younghea Tilby against the decision of North Hertfordshire District Council.
 - The application Ref: 19/00059/FP, dated 21 January 2019, was refused by notice dated 27 March 2019.
 - The development proposed is a single storey side extension following demolition of the existing garage to facilitate the separation of the existing bungalow into two 2-bedroom dwellings.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the development upon the character and appearance of the surrounding area.

Reasons

3. The appeal site contains a dwelling located at the end of a row of bungalows. These are set back from the highway edge by a uniform amount and have relatively open front boundaries. A notable feature of these bungalows is that they are similar in terms of appearance owing to the presence of a door in the centre of the front elevation, the presence of two bay windows and a hipped roof. Whilst some of the dwellings have been extended, these extensions are subordinate to the original dwelling.
4. The proposed development would result in the construction of an extension in order to create an additional dwelling. The new dwelling would be accessed via an area to the side of the existing bungalow. This would disrupt the site and the surrounding area as it would result in a dwelling that has a notably different form to those within the immediate vicinity. This is because it would not feature a centrally located front door, bay windows and hipped roof. In addition, the proposed dwelling would be set back from the highway by a significantly greater amount than others within the established row of dwellings.
5. Given these notable differences and the prominence of the appeal site, the proposed development would result in an incongruous development. The open character of the front boundary of the appeal site, and others within the row,

- would mean that this form of development could not be appropriately screened.
6. The proposed dwelling would comprise an extension to the existing dwelling. This would have a predominantly flat roof. This form of development would contrast with the prevailing character of pitched and hipped roofs that are prevalent within the vicinity. As the proposed dwelling would be visible from the street and the adjoining dwelling, the effect on the character and appearance of the surrounding area would be significant.
 7. I acknowledge that the dwelling has previously been extended, however, the proposed dwelling would have a height and projection greater than the existing structure. Therefore, I find that the presence of the existing extension does not overcome my previous concerns.
 8. The proposed development would result in the subdivision of the garden of the property. However, views of this arrangement would be screened from adjoining properties and public areas by the boundary treatments around the perimeter of the site. Therefore, I do not find that this subdivision, by itself, would amount to harm to the character and appearance of the surrounding area. However, this matter does not outweigh the harm as previously identified.
 9. I therefore conclude that the proposed development would have an adverse effect upon the character and appearance of the surrounding area. The development, in this regard, would fail to accord with the requirements of Policies 26 and 57 of the North Hertfordshire District Local Plan No. 2 (with alterations). These policies, amongst other matters, seek to ensure that new developments have an acceptable impact upon the character and appearance of the surrounding area and have a layout that is acceptable in visual terms.

Other Matters

10. The evidence before me is indicative that the Council cannot currently demonstrate a five-year housing land supply. Accordingly, the 'tilted balance' as outlined in paragraph 11(d) of the Framework applies. This states that planning permission should be granted for residential development unless the benefits of the proposal are significantly and demonstrably outweighed by the harm.
11. I acknowledge that the proposed development would provide an additional dwelling, and that the development would result in two dwellings that might be attractive to first time buyers. I would anticipate that there would be some benefits to the local economy arising from the construction process. However, such benefits would likely be small-scale and localised in impacts. Furthermore, some economic benefits might not be permanent. I therefore give each of these points a limited amount of weight.
12. Given that I have been directed towards development plan policies, which seek to ensure that new developments do not adversely affect the character of the area, and I have identified that the scheme would harm the character and appearance of the area to a notable degree, I conclude that the benefits of the proposed development are significantly and demonstrably outweighed by the harm.

13. I note that the appellant has had difficulties in selling the property in its current form. However, in assessing this scheme, I consider that this matter is outweighed by the substantial harm to the character and appearance of the surrounding area.

Conclusion

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

Benjamin Clarke

INSPECTOR