



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 28 July 2020

by Benjamin Clarke BA (Hons.) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: Friday, 04 September 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/J1915/D/20/3249105

31 Aston End Road, Aston SG2 7EU

- 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 P. Fraser against the decision of East Hertfordshire District Council.
 - The application Ref: 3/20/0043/HH, dated 9 January 2020, was refused by notice dated 4 March 2020.
 - The development proposed is a part two-storey, part single storey rear extension following demolition of existing single storey rear extension.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The property is sited within the Metropolitan Green Belt. Paragraph 145 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) states that the erection of new buildings in the Green Belt are generally inappropriate. There are some exceptions to this, which include the provision of an extension to a dwelling if it does not represent a disproportionate addition to the dwelling. In this instance, the floor space that would be added to the dwelling would not compromise the intrinsic quality of openness within the Green Belt. In consequence, from the evidence before me, the Main Issue is the effect of the development upon the character and appearance of the surrounding area, with particular reference to the Aston Conservation Area.

Reasons

3. The appeal site consists of a detached house constructed with bricks and tiles on the building's elevations. The site is located at the junction of Aston End Road and St Mary's Close. The site is also within the Aston Conservation Area (the CA). The significance of the CA is, in part, derived from the presence of traditionally designed buildings located within a landscaped and more open setting. Whilst there are some more modern buildings within the vicinity, these maintain the open and verdant character. The appeal site is also identified in the CA Appraisal (2018) as making an important architectural contribution.
4. Whilst the floor space of the extension has been configured in such a way so as not to affect the openness of the Green Belt, the proposed extension would have a significant width and projection. In consequence, the proposal would erode the character of regular proportions present in the building's footprint.

5. In addition, the proposed extension would not represent a subordinate addition to the main dwelling as its eaves would be the same as the existing house. Furthermore, the proposed extension would have a roof slope that is steeper than the existing dwelling. In consequence, the design of the proposal would conflict with the traditional character and form of the existing dwelling. This would occur irrespective of the palette of materials that is proposed to be used within the development.
6. By reason of the scale and positioning of the proposed extension, the development would erode the open, verdant character of the surrounding area and the traditional forms of architecture that are readily apparent within the CA.
7. These matters are of concern as the site occupies a prominent position in the area owing to its proximity to the junction with St Mary's Close. As this road serves a significant number of dwellings, the proposed extension would be a particularly notable addition to the locality.
8. Whilst the proposed development would replace an existing extension, this structure does not have the same projection and is of a single storey, with a flat roof. In consequence, it has a substantially smaller mass than the development before me.
9. Furthermore, owing to its limited height and the site's boundary treatments, views of the existing building are not readily apparent from the wider area. This contrasts with the proposed extension, which would be readily perceptible from the surrounding area. In result, the existing structure does not have the same adverse effects that the proposed development would have. I therefore find that the presence of an existing extension does not require me to disregard my previous concerns.
10. I acknowledge that the proposed development would increase the level of surveillance of the property's rear garden. Whilst this is of some note, it does not outweigh the adverse effects on the character and appearance of the site and wider area as previously identified.
11. I therefore conclude that the proposed development would have an adverse effect upon the character and appearance of the surrounding area, including the CA. The development, in this regard, would fail to comply with Policies DES4, HA1, HA4 and HOU11 of the East Herts District Plan (2018). These policies, amongst other matters, seek to ensure that new extensions should be subservient to the main dwelling and be of a size, scale, mass, and form that are appropriate to the existing building and, or, the surrounding area; that developments are of a high standard of design which promote local distinctiveness; preserve and, where appropriate, enhance the historic environment; and preserve or enhance the special interest, character, and appearance of Conservation Areas.

Other Matter

12. I acknowledge efforts made by the appellant in attempting to overcome the reasons for refusal of a previous application for planning permission. However, in considering this appeal I have identified adverse effects on the character and appearance of the surrounding area. In consequence, this point does not overcome my previous conclusions.

Planning Balance and Conclusion

13. The harm that would occur to the character and appearance of the CA would not be severe, and therefore it would be 'less than substantial' within the meaning of the Framework. Paragraph 196 of the Framework requires that such harm be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal. As the proposed development is an extension of a dwelling any public benefits are likely to be limited to a positive economic effect during the construction process. By reason of the scale of the development, such benefits are likely to be comparatively small-scale, temporary, and localised in impact.
14. Thus, when giving considerable importance and weight to the special attention I must pay to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the CA, I find that the harm that would arise from the proposal would not be outweighed by its limited public benefits. Accordingly, there would be a conflict with Paragraph 194 of the Framework as harm to designated heritage assets would not have a clear and convincing justification.
15. Therefore, for the preceding reasons, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Benjamin Clarke

INSPECTOR