
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 18 November 2020

by Richard Aston BSc (Hons) DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 2 December 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/N1540/D/20/3256316

11 Manor Road, Harlow CM17 0BE

- 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 Sam Starkey against the decision of Harlow District Council.
 - The application Ref HW/HSE/20/00171, dated 18 April 2020, was refused by notice dated 18 June 2020.
 - The development proposed is loft conversion with raised gable and rear flat roof dormer.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matter

2. I have been referred to the emerging Harlow Local Development Plan Pre-submission publication 2018 ('ELP'). The consultation in relation to the detailed Main Modifications to the ELP ended on 31 May 2020 and a final report is awaited. Given the stage of progress and in accordance with paragraph 48 of the National Planning Policy Framework ('the Framework') I afford it limited weight.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the Harlow Garden Village Estate Conservation Area ('the HGVECA').

Reasons

4. There is a statutory duty imposed by Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requiring decision makers to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area.
5. The HGVECA is a small and tightly defined 21st century conservation area and its significance appears to me to lie in its highly planned and formal garden village layout and style, with collections of cohesive housing groups shaped around landscape features. The dwellings within these groups exhibit a strong garden village character and appearance derived from unifying architectural features and detailing. Overall, it is a significant example of early 20th century suburban housing design and layout.
6. Manor Road in particular has a highly distinctive and cohesive character formed in part by its curvilinear route. Its dwellings are stated to exhibit a garden

village estate character within the Council's CAA¹ and careful layout, roofscape elements, use of materials and detailing and soft landscaping all combine to frame a picturesque and semi-bucolic street scene. The appellant contends this reference in the CAA includes No. 9 as extended. However, I do not consider this to be determinative as I read this to be a general reference by the author because even in its extended and altered state that property still exhibits elements of significance.

7. I also observed that the housing groups provide discrete elements of townscape and the symmetrical composition of a street picture or scene is achieved, amongst other things, by shared roofscape features. In Manor Road consistent rows of hipped roofs on the western side frame the form of the buildings against a backdrop of sky, creating a distinctive 'V' shape between them and allowing greater spacing at roof level. These roofscape elements provide a sense of rhythm and visual interest to views through the area, highlighted by the central curve around the landscaped island and the slightly elevated position of the properties on the western side of the road.
8. The neighbouring property of No. 9 is part of this group and benefits from a similar extension to that before me. My attention has also been drawn to a similar extension at No. 60 Manor Road. No evidence of the planning history has been put before me and I therefore cannot be certain as to when either was constructed or if planning permission was granted. Whatever the case may be, these 2 extensions are features of the character and appearance of this part of the conservation area, but they are not prevalent. They are anomalies that were not intended to be architectural features on this style of property and from all that I have read and seen, on this type of property they do not contribute positively to the significance of the group or the HGVECA, as a whole.
9. The siting of Nos. 7 and 9 and 11 and 13 means the proposal would not be directly visible until travelling around the bend in the road outside these properties. Further, I acknowledge that the replication of the gable at No. 9 may result in the appeal property being seen and read in conjunction with that property. From a few limited viewpoints within the street the proposal would also partially obscure the gable and rear dormer on No. 9.
10. This would however be at the expense of harmfully unbalancing the existing roof form and symmetry of Nos. 11 and 13 as a pair, the harmful visual effects of which I was able to observe at Nos. 7 and 9. The eye would be unacceptably drawn to a combination of 2 staggered gable ends, rooflights and the erosion of the space between the roof forms of Nos. 11 and 9. It would harmfully diminish the backdrop of sky, views through at roof level and the positive contribution such gaps and the uniformity and rhythm of the original roof forms make to the character and appearance of the HGVECA.
11. Turning to the rear dormer although similar to that on the rear elevation of No. 9, I saw that such development was also not a characteristic feature of rear roofs of properties on this side of Manor Road. In such proximity to the ridge and its sides, the overall bulk and extent of the dormer would not appear incidental to the roof slope. Its scale and design would dominate the simple, traditional form of the existing roof, resulting in an overly prominent and unduly dominant addition. Notwithstanding the dormer at No. 9, such

¹ Harlow Garden Village Estate Conservation Area Character Appraisal 2013.

development would be out of keeping with the character and appearance of the host property and the prevailing appearance of the roofscape of the area. In such a context both elements of the proposal would not constitute a high quality of design.

12. Overall, and despite the use of matching materials and detailing the proposal would result in the further erosion of the architectural integrity and significance of the host property, the group and the HGVECA as a whole. It would cause harm and would not preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the HGVECA. It would therefore conflict with Policies BE1, BE9 and BE10 of the Harlow Local Plan 2006 and the guidance within the Harlow Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document. When taken as a whole and amongst other things these require extended buildings to strengthen, enhance and protect local character, be visually appropriate and of an appropriate design and not be detrimental to the architectural or historical character or appearance of a conservation area.

Other Matters

13. The appellant has referred to the proposal being 'sustainable development' in terms of the Framework. In the context of paragraph 196 the harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset would be less than substantial and this should be weighed against the public benefits.
14. The proposal is designed to accommodate a growing family and would improve the quality and extent of the living accommodation. Given its scale there would be some small associated economic and social benefits. Nevertheless, these benefits do not outweigh the harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset that I have identified. Consequently, the proposal would also conflict with the heritage objectives of the Framework.
15. Even if the presumption in favour of sustainable development in paragraph 11 d) of the Framework was engaged, given this finding the application of policies in the Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed, in accordance with 11 d) i. The proposal would not therefore be the sustainable development for which the Framework indicates a presumption in favour.

Conclusion

16. For the reasons given above, the proposal would conflict with the development plan, when read as a whole. Material considerations, including the Framework do not indicate that a decision should be made other than in accordance with the development plan.
17. Having considered all other matters raised, I therefore conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Richard Aston

INSPECTOR

