



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 24 November 2020

by Benjamin Clarke BA (Hons.) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: Thursday, 17 December 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/C1950/D/20/3248176

6 Bennett Close, Welwyn Garden City AL7 4JA

- 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 C. Rashleigh against the decision of Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council.
 - The application Ref: 6/2019/2734/HOUSE, dated 29 October 2019, was refused by notice dated 20 December 2019.
 - The development proposed is the erection of part two storey side and rear extension with conversion of garage into habitable space.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed, and planning permission is granted for a garage conversion and part single, part two-storey rear extension at 6 Bennett Close, Welwyn Garden City AL7 4JA in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref: 6/2019/2734/HOUSE, dated 29 October 2019, and the plans submitted with it, subject to the following conditions:
 - 1) The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than three years from the date of this decision.
 - 2) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: AT826-01A; AT826-04B; and AT826-05A.
 - 3) The materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of the development hereby permitted shall match those used in the existing building.

Procedural Matters

2. The Council amended the description of the proposed development from 'garage conversion and part single, part two-storey rear extension' to 'erection of part two storey side and rear extension with conversion of garage into habitable space'. The revised description has also been used, by the appellant, on the appeal form. I consider that the revised description represents a more succinct description of the proposals and have therefore proceeded on this basis.
3. The appeal documents contain a different floor plan to the one listed on the Council's decision notice. However, given that the only change is the amendment to the annotations to show a bathroom, I do not consider it would cause prejudice to any party to consider the appeal on the basis of this revised plan.

Main Issue

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

Reasons

5. The appeal site contains a detached dwelling that is set back from the highway in line with the neighbouring dwelling at 5 Bennett Close. The neighbouring dwelling at 7 Bennett Close is set further back from the highway edge. The surrounding area contains a variety of detached and terraced dwellings constructed to several different designs.
6. Whilst the proposed development would reduce the gap between the existing dwelling and the neighbouring house at No. 7, some space would remain to the side of the proposed extension. In result, the appellant's dwelling and the neighbouring house would remain as detached buildings.
7. In addition, owing to the variety of house types in the surrounding area, there are few unifying trends with regards to the appearance of individual dwellings and the separation gaps between them. In consequence, the character of the surrounding area can be described as featuring a variety of different gaps between dwellings. In result, the narrowing of the gap between Nos. 5 and 6 would not appear unduly incongruous.
8. Furthermore, owing to the position of the existing dwelling, views of the proposed development from the surrounding area would be limited. This is because of the screening effect offered by the existing dwelling and the two neighbouring houses. For these reasons, the proposed extension would not be readily apparent within the wider surrounding area.
9. Although views would be possible from the area in front of the appeal site, such views by reason of the layout of the surrounding buildings would occur on a relatively infrequent basis. Accordingly, the proposed development would not be particularly injurious to the character of the surrounding area.
10. My attention has been drawn to the Council's Supplementary Design Guidance (2005). Amongst other matters, this states that a minimum distance of 1m between the extension and the adjoining flank boundary must be maintained.
11. Owing to the irregular shaped boundary between the appeal site and No. 7, the proposed extension would, in part, be notably less than 1m away from the boundary. However, owing to the variety of separation distances between dwellings within the surrounding area and the perceptible gap between the appeal site and the neighbouring dwelling; combined with the general lack of prominence of the proposed development, this arrangement would not be discordant. Therefore, I do not consider that the harm arising from this breach would be significant.
12. The existing dwelling features a single storey garage to the side between it and No. 7. Whilst some of the surrounding properties also feature a garage adjacent to their side elevations, they do not occur with such frequency to represent a defining characteristic. Consequently, the loss of this feature would not be injurious to the character of the surrounding area.

13. In addition, the proposed extension would feature a set back of the front elevation when compared to the existing dwelling. This would be viewed alongside the lower ridge height of the extension. These design features would ensure that the proposed development would appear to be a subordinate addition to the building. In result, the proposed development would not erode the general form of the appeal site and the prominence of the proposed extension would be further reduced.
14. The proposed development would feature a crown roof. However, the roof slopes would be consistent with the existing dwelling and could be constructed from materials that would be complimentary towards the original dwelling. In result, the proposed development would not appear particularly unusual or incongruous.
15. I therefore conclude that the proposed development would not have an adverse effect upon the character and appearance of the surrounding area. The development, in this regard, would conform with the requirements of Policies D1 and D2 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan (2005). Amongst other matters, these seek to ensure that new developments are of a high quality of design and respect and relate to the character and context of the surrounding area.

Conditions

16. In addition to an implementation condition, a condition specifying the approved proposed plans is necessary in the interests of precision. In order to ensure that the proposed extension harmonises with the original dwelling, a condition requiring that the proposed extension be constructed from materials that match the existing building is necessary.

Conclusion

17. For the preceding reasons, I conclude that the appeal should be allowed, and planning permission granted.

Benjamin Clarke

INSPECTOR