



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 26 January 2021

by Benjamin Clarke BA (Hons.) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: Friday, 19 February 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/K1935/D/20/3263393

30 Orchard Crescent, Stevenage SG1 3EN

- 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 Paul Elkington against the decision of Stevenage Borough Council.
 - The application Ref: 20/00228/FPH, dated 27 April 2020, was refused by notice dated 27 August 2020.
 - The development is a proposed demolition of existing side garage and existing rear extension to form a new double storey front, side, and part rear extension, installation of rooflight and solar panels.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are:
 - the effect of the development upon the character and appearance of the surrounding area; and
 - the effect of the development upon the living conditions of the occupiers of adjoining properties.

Reasons

Character and appearance

3. The appeal site contains a semi-detached house alongside other dwellings of comparable proportions. There are relatively wide gaps between dwellings, which gives the surrounding area an open, suburban character. The appeal site is near to Bridge Road, which is located on land that is on a higher level than the appeal site.
4. The proposed extension would add a significant amount of width to the dwelling and would have a height comparable to the original house. This is concerning as this would lead to an erosion of the symmetry that exists between the appellant's dwelling and the adjoining house at 28 Orchard Crescent. Given that the proposed extension would be readily viewed from different vantage points within the road, the development, in this regard, would appear incongruous.

5. Although some screening would be offered by other dwellings in the vicinity, the overall screening effect would be limited and therefore would not overcome the incongruous form arising from the side extension.
6. The proposed rear extension would feature two rear gables, which would project into the rear garden. This, combined with the scale of the extension, would form a bulky addition to the house and results in a dwelling that is significantly larger than the existing building and those on neighbouring plots. In result, the proposed development would be discordant.
7. This is a concern given that the appeal site would be visible from Bridge Road, which is sited on higher land. Therefore, despite being to the rear of the property, the form of the proposed extension would be readily apparent and would erode the character and appearance of the surrounding area.
8. I note that the appeal site contains some existing structures within the rear garden. However, these have much smaller proportions than the proposed extension. In result, they do not have the same effects as the proposed development would have. Therefore, their presence does not overcome my previous concerns.
9. Although the proposed rear extension would feature a lower height than the original house, the eaves height would be comparable to the existing dwelling. This, along with the projection and roof shape, would mean that the proposed extension would not appear to be a subordinate addition and would contribute towards an erosion of the area's character.
10. 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 conflict with Policies GD1 and SP8 of the Stevenage Local Plan 2011-2031 (2019) (the Local Plan) and the Stevenage Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (2009) (the SPD). These, amongst other matters, seek to ensure that developments make a positive contribution to the its location and surroundings; preserve the most important characteristics of Stevenage; and extensions should appear subservient.

Living conditions

11. The proposed development would extent a semi-detached dwelling. The existing building is attached to No. 28. In addition, the appeal site is next to 32 Orchard Crescent, although this house is not attached to the appellant's dwelling. The boundaries of the appeal site's rear garden are marked by hedges and low wooden fences.
12. By reason of the projection of the extension and its height, the proposed development would result in a significant enclosing effect upon the garden at No. 32. This is because the neighbouring dwelling is located further forward on the plot and therefore the side elevation of the side and rear extension would be readily perceptible when viewed from the adjoining garden. This would lead to an overbearing effect upon this space.
13. In addition, the projection and overall height of the extension would have a significant enclosing and overbearing effect upon the adjoining property at No. 32. This would include the dwelling's rear windows.

14. Although the highest part of the extension would be set back from the shared boundary between the appeal site and No. 28, the height and mass of the rear extension in its entirety would remain readily perceptible when viewed from the neighbouring property. This would occur irrespective of the fact that the extension's proportions would be smaller when closest to the boundary with No. 28
15. By reason of the relatively even topography between the two sites and the limited boundary treatments, the development would still have a significant enclosing and overbearing effect upon the neighbouring property's rear garden and rear elevation windows.
16. There is some debate regarding the precise distance that the two-storey extension is set back from the shared boundary between No. 28. However, the form and design of the extension is such that the proposed development, in its entirety would be visible from the neighbouring property's rear windows and garden. This increase in built form would result in a loss of outlook for the neighbouring occupiers.
17. Owing to the orientation of the appeal site, the proposed development would not cause a loss of light to the occupiers of the neighbouring properties. However, this would not outweigh my previous concerns.
18. My attention has been drawn to a '45-degree test' within the SPD. However, this test is designed to ensure that a proposed development would not affect light levels at neighbouring properties. Therefore, even if I were to conclude that the proposed development would comply with this test, it would not overcome my concerns with regards to the effect of the development upon the levels of outlook experienced by the occupiers of neighbouring properties.
19. I therefore conclude that the proposed development would have an adverse effect upon the living conditions of the occupiers of neighbouring properties. The development, in this regard, would conflict with Policies GD1 and SP8 of the Local Plan, and the SPD. These, amongst other matters, seek to ensure that new developments do not have an adverse effect upon neighbouring uses and the surrounding area; be constructed to a good standard of design; and maintain the living conditions of neighbours.

Other Matters

20. I note concerns raised by the appellant regarding the manner in which the application was assessed by the Council. However, in considering this appeal, I have limited my assessment to the planning matters before me.
21. Although the proposed development would not have an adverse effect on the highway system, this is only one of the matters that must be considered. In result, it does not outweigh my conclusions in respect of the Main Issues.

Conclusion

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

Benjamin Clarke

INSPECTOR