



Appeal Decision

Site Visit made on 9 March 2021

by R Sabu BA(Hons), BArch, MA, PgDip ARB RIBA

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 18th March 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/C1950/D/20/3264253

8 Elmoor Close, Welwyn, AL6 9PF

- 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. S. Critchlow against the decision of Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 6/2020/2011/HOUSE, dated 10 August 2020, was refused by notice dated 5 October 2020.
 - The development proposed is Removal of existing chimney and raising of existing ridge height to facilitate loft conversion, including erection of rear dormer with 2 x rear facing Juliette balconies and insertion of 3 x front facing roof lights.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Applications for costs

2. An application for costs was made by Mr. S. Critchlow against Welwyn Hatfield Council. This application is the subject of a separate Decision.

Preliminary Matters

3. I note the Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council Draft Local Plan Proposed Submission August 2016. However, since there is no certainty that it will be adopted in its current form, I attribute the policies within limited weight.

Main Issues

4. The main issues are:
 - the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the host building and surrounding area; and
 - the effect of the parking provision for the proposed development on highway safety and the convenience of other highway users in the vicinity of the appeal site.

Reasons

Character and Appearance

5. Elmoor Close is characterised by detached single storey dwellings, some with rear dormer extensions. The buildings are generally of a low height and moderate spacing such that the area has a pleasant spacious feel.
6. The proposed dormer extension would occupy most of the roof space and would be set in from the ridge and sides of the roof by only a small amount.

The ridge of the main roof would be raised, and the roof of the proposed dormer extension would be set at a level higher than the ridge of the existing roof. Therefore, the overall massing of the proposal would dominate not only the roof, but the dwelling as a whole resulting in a top-heavy appearance. I note that the proposed materials would match that of the existing dwellings. However, given the proposed massing, the scheme would adversely affect the character of the host property and would unduly diminish the spacious feel of the area.

7. In 2020 the Council granted a Certificate of Lawfulness for the removal of existing chimney, erection of a full width rear dormer to include 2 x Juliette balconies and insertion of 3 x new roof lights to facilitate the conversion of existing loft into a habitable space. From the evidence, this 2020 scheme would be likely to be implemented should this appeal fail and thus forms a fall-back position.
8. The 2020 scheme does not include raising of the ridge, and the proposed dormer for that scheme would be roughly at the level of the existing ridge. Therefore, the overall height of the flat roof for this appeal scheme would be at a higher level than that of the fall-back position. I note that the proposed dormer for the fall-back scheme would be full width compared to the appeal scheme where the flank walls of the dormer would be set in a small distance from the sides. However, given the increased height of the flat roof of this appeal scheme compared with the fall-back scheme, this appeal proposal would result in an unduly top-heavy appearance, causing greater harm to the character of the host dwelling and the surrounding area.
9. I note the evidence regarding No 2 Elmoor Close. However, since that scheme is in a different location on the street and set further back than the building line of the appeal property, it is not directly comparable with this scheme.
10. Consequently, the proposed development would harm the character and appearance of the area. Therefore, it would conflict with Policy D1 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan Adopted 2005 (DP) which seeks high quality design. It would also conflict with the National Planning Policy Framework in this respect.

Parking provision

11. The proposal would add two bedrooms to an existing two-bedroom dwelling. The site is located at the end of a turning head, and adjacent to dwellings on either side with driveways and off-street parking spaces. Elmoor Close is a narrow road with residential properties many of which have driveways.
12. I note the evidence regarding on street parking capacity and local bus routes and services. Given the lack of evidence regarding the internal size of the garage and its siting behind an existing parking space on a steep slope, there has not been a demonstration that it forms a usable parking space. Given the number of proposed bedrooms, it is likely that the proposal would require three parking spaces, of which one is provided on the site.
13. I also note the age of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan Review Supplementary Planning Guidance Parking Standards Adopted January 2004 (SPG). While it sets out the maximum allowable provision, the SPG also states that the standards will normally be the starting point from which progressive reductions

in on-site provision may be made based on the accessibility of the site.

Notwithstanding the evidence regarding local bus services, given the location of the site in parking zone 4, there is little substantial evidence before me to demonstrate that a reduction in the required on-site provision is justified in this instance.

14. Accordingly, while I note the lack of comments from the Highway Authority, given the location of the site at the turning head and that the scheme would result in a four bedroom dwelling, the proposal could, albeit in a worst-case scenario, result in up to two cars being parked on the street in the vicinity of the appeal site. I also acknowledge the evidence regarding existing on-street parking levels and restrictions. However, given the siting of the scheme and width of the road, the proposed development would be likely lead to increased instances of dangerous and obstructive parking, such as at the turning head, on footways or across driveways, to the detriment of the free and safe flow of traffic.
15. Consequently, the lack of parking provision for the proposed development would have an unacceptable impact on highway safety and the convenience of other highway users in the vicinity of the appeal site. Therefore, it would conflict with DP Policy M14 which requires parking provision to be made in accordance with the standards set out in the Councils supplementary parking guidance.

Other Matters

16. I acknowledge concerns regarding the service provided by the Council. However, I have necessarily assessed the proposal based on its planning merits. I also note the evidence relating to the efficient use of land. Given the harm identified above, this point has not altered my overall decision.

Conclusion

17. For the reasons given above, the appeal is dismissed.

R Sabu

INSPECTOR