



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 4 May 2021 by Thomas Courtney BA(Hons) MA

Decision by Martin Seaton BSc (Hons) DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 8 June 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/J1915/W/21/3267611

34 Hertford Road, Great Amwell, SG12 9RX

- 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 & Mrs Minides against the decision of East Hertfordshire District Council.
 - The application Ref 3/20/1973/FUL, dated 12 October 2020, was refused by notice dated 7 December 2020.
 - The development proposed is the demolition of existing double garage and erection of new detached dwelling and outbuilding, along with associated landscaping.
-

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Appeal Procedure

2. The site visit was undertaken by an Appeal Planning Officer whose recommendation is set out below and to which the Inspector has had regard before deciding the appeal.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the development on the character and appearance of the surrounding area.

Reasons for the Recommendation

4. The appeal site accommodates a two-storey detached dwelling located on the northern side of Hertford Road, although it is accessed via Stanstead Road (B1502). The existing host property lies within a substantial plot and features a large garage, a small outbuilding on the eastern boundary, and a swimming pool. The existing dwelling is set-back from the road allowing for a large area of hardstanding and gravel to the front. The plot's boundaries accommodate mature trees and shrubs giving the site a sylvan character.
 5. The site is located in an established residential area characterised by large detached properties of varying architectural styles. The houses along Hertford Road are staggered and set-back from the road with landscaped front gardens and driveways. The two neighbouring properties to the east of the appeal site (Nos. 32 & 30 Hertford Road) lie in close proximity to each other with minimal separation space. More conventional separation distances between properties characterise the rest of the northern side of Hertford Road. In my view, the appeal site and the immediate surrounding area is typified by an agreeable
-

sense of spaciousness reinforced by the existing visual gap between No.34 and No.32.

6. A previous application for the erection of a new detached dwelling was refused by the Council in June 2020 (*LPA ref 3/20/0835/FUL*). The current proposal is broadly similar in respect of the overall design although the scale and height of the proposed dwelling has been slightly reduced.
7. Whilst there is no solid coherent design character within the area and no consistent building line on the northern side of Hertford Road, most properties in the vicinity feature hipped roofs, projecting bay windows and dormers, appearing as conventional 20th Century suburban-type housing. The proposed dwelling would feature steep pitched double front gables and vast areas of glazing, appearing as a chalet-type dwelling. I find the proposed contemporary design would jar with the surrounding architectural context and the general roof structure would appear incongruous in light of the two prominent front gables and central crowned section. Although I note the maximum height of the roof would be acceptable, I disagree that it is a traditional design as has been contended by the appellant.
8. The proposed dwelling would also appear unduly bulky in this location and would have a considerably larger footprint than the host property. I find it would have a dominant effect on No.34 and appear obtrusive in its context. I have had regard to the appellant's table which compares footprints and building-to-plot ratios in the vicinity. Whilst the appellant opines that the table demonstrates the proposal would sit comfortably within the plot, it confirms that the proposed dwelling would have a larger footprint and exceed the building-to-plot ratio of the closest properties on Hertford Road. It would thus appear out of scale with the adjacent properties.
9. The proposed development would not possess a generous spacing to either side of its flank elevations. Instead, it would significantly reduce the visual gap between the host dwelling and No.32 thus eroding the sense of spaciousness which typifies this part of the western end of Hertford Road. Whilst I accept the principle of a new dwelling in this location and the sub-division of the plot, the scale and mass of the proposed dwelling would be excessive, and the resultant building would adversely impact the streetscene.
10. My attention has been drawn to other developments on Hertford Road and in the wider vicinity. Whilst I am mindful that each proposal should be assessed on its own merits, these developments are seemingly not comparable to the proposal as they are either extensions to existing properties, new-builds that are appropriately distanced from neighbouring dwellings such as at Nos. 8 & 10 Gypsy Lane, or a replacement dwelling such as at No. 50 Pepperhill. The developments referred to therefore do not lend any significant positive weight to the proposal.
11. The proposed development would result in a bulky and unduly prominent dwelling which would adversely impact the character and appearance of the area. It would therefore conflict with Policies DES4, HOU11 and VILL2 of the East Hertfordshire District Plan 2018 which together aim to ensure proposals are well-designed and reflect local distinctiveness.

Other Matters

12. Whilst I acknowledge the proposed development would provide adequate living conditions for future occupiers and would satisfy the level of accommodation required by the appellants, this does not outweigh the permanent harm to the character and appearance of the area I have identified. Furthermore, whilst I have had regard to the appellant's contention regarding the possibility of undertaking extensions to the existing property as permitted development, there is no evidence or basis from which to conclude that this is a likely scenario to which any weight should be attached as a fallback position.
13. The appellants consider the proposal would deliver a long-term efficient home of sustainable design with excellent energy credentials far exceeding minimum building standards, however I have not been provided with evidence to attest to this assertion. I note that reference is made to the south-facing glazing allowing for passive solar gain however no other environmentally sustainable measure is put forward. I am therefore not satisfied the proposed dwelling would constitute the claimed energy-efficient housing resulting in net environmental gain.
14. Whilst I sympathise with the appellant's claim regarding the Council's behaviour during the application process, this has had no bearing on my assessment of the proposed scheme which has focused on the planning merits of the proposed development.

Recommendation

15. For the reasons given above and having had regard to all other matters raised, I recommend that the appeal should be dismissed.

Thomas Courtney

APPEAL PLANNING OFFICER

Inspector's Decision

16. I have considered all the submitted evidence and the Appeal Planning Officer's report and on that basis the appeal is dismissed.

Martin Seaton

INSPECTOR