



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 5 March 2021

by Euan FS Pearson BA(Hons) BTP FRGS MRICS MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 24 June 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/C1950/D/21/3266387

8 Valley Road, Welwyn Garden City AL8 7DF

- 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 R Morrall against the decision of Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 6/2020/2468/HOUSE, dated 25 September 2020, was refused by notice dated 27 November 2020.
 - The development proposed is described as the installation of front dormer windows.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for installation of front dormer windows, in accordance with the terms of application Ref 6/2020/2468/HOUSE, dated 25 September 2020 and subject to the following conditions:
 - 1) The development hereby permitted shall begin no later than 3 years from the date of this decision.
 - 2) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: Drawing Nos. TPMS391/8VR/01 Rev 09, TPMS391/8VR/02 Rev 010 and Site Plan/Location Plan.
 - 3) No development shall take place until samples of the materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of the dormers hereby permitted have been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. Development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

Procedural Matters

2. I have amended the description of development to remove the reference to the previous refusal of planning permission, in the interests of clarity.
3. I have taken into account relevant provisions of the draft Local Plan, as referred to in the reasons for refusal. However, as the draft Local Plan is currently under examination its policies are of limited weight at this stage.

Main Issue

4. The main issue is whether the proposed development would preserve or enhance on the character or appearance of the Welwyn Garden City Conservation Area.

Reasons

5. The appeal property is a two-storey detached neo-Georgian dwellinghouse at the north end of Valley Road which is characterised by detached or semi-detached dwellings, a number of which have front dormers as part of their original design. The area is also characterised by the spaces between the dwellings which are important in terms of the original garden city plan of Louis De Soisson.
6. The proposed development seeks to add two dormer windows to the front roof slope of the appeal property. I observed from my site visit that the dwellinghouses directly opposite the appeal property, Nos. 7 and 9; and 13 and 15, have flat roofed dormers to the front, close enough to appear as pairs. The flat roof dormer to the front of No.17, a later addition, respects the original fenestration arrangement.
7. This part of the Conservation Area, I consider, is characterised by carefully composed groupings/rows of housing arranged around grass-verged roads and areas of open space. Although the vast majority of roofs in the vicinity remain unaltered, dormers are an original design feature of some and, thus, form part of the streetscene.
8. The proposed individual dormers would be around 1.3m wide, 1.5m apart, and taken together, centred within the roof slope. Positioned over 2m away from the edge of the roof, and set down sufficiently below the ridge line, I consider the dormers would be subordinate in scale and would not dominate the front roof slope thus not harming the character or appearance of the appeal property.
9. This size of proposed dormer with colonial patterned windows and tiled cheeks would be both: proportionate in scale to those below, maintaining symmetry along a vertical axis; and appropriate relating to the original architectural style of the appeal property and the design of neighbouring properties, thus not harming the character or appearance of the appeal property or the Conservation Area.
10. The appeal property is set back from the public highway, views from which are partially obscured by well-established garden planting, that would restrict views of the proposed dormers. Whilst this planting may not remain for the long term, as the proposed dormers would not be unduly prominent, they would not cause harm to the character or appearance of the surrounding area.
11. The statutory duty in Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 is of considerable weight and importance. This is reflected in the NPPF at paragraph 193 which states that great weight should be given to the asset's conservation irrespective of the degree of harm. Having regard to my findings above on the setting, roofscape, design and scale of development, I conclude the proposal would preserve the character or appearance of Welwyn Garden City Conservation Area.

12. Therefore, the proposal complies with policies D1 and D2 of Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005, and Welwyn Hatfield District Plan Supplementary Design Guidance 2005. The proposal also complies with emerging policies SADM11 and SADM15 of Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council Draft Local Plan Proposed Submission 2016. Among other things, these require a high quality of design of development, including residential extensions, that respect the character of the existing dwelling and local surroundings.

Conditions

13. I have considered the need for conditions against the advice on conditions set out in the NPPF and the Planning Practice Guidance. I have imposed standard conditions relating to the commencement of development and specifying the relevant plans in order to provide certainty. I have also included a pre-commencement condition, with the agreement of the appellant, requiring samples of the materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces to be submitted to the Council for approval, to protect the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

Conclusion

14. For the reasons given above, I conclude that the appeal should be allowed.

Euan FS Pearson

INSPECTOR