



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 15 June 2021

by B Davies MSc FGS CGeol

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 6 July 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/U3935/D/21/3271739

160 Goddard Avenue, Old Town, Swindon, SN1 4HX

- 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 and Mrs Moccia against the decision of Swindon Borough Council.
 - The application Ref S/HOU/20/1633/PEKO, dated 15 December 2020, was refused by notice dated 17 March 2021.
 - The development proposed is a two storey side extension, entailing the demolition and redevelopment of an existing single storey garage.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the development on the character and appearance of the Town Gardens Conservation Area.

Reasons

3. Goddard Avenue is lined with substantial, 3-storey, bay-fronted terraced houses, rich in architectural detailing, which form part of the Town Gardens Conservation Area (the 'CA'). The appeal site is close to the entrance of Goddard Avenue, which is framed by two impressive houses, turned diagonally to face the junction. No 160 is the first terraced house encountered when approached from this direction.
4. The space between the junction and terraces was designed to provide clear separation between the avenue entrance and terraced housing, and this configuration can still be observed on the opposite side of the road. A single, detached house partly infills the space before No 160, but a sense of space and openness remains, which positively contributes to the character and appearance of the CA. I do not consider that a view of buildings through the gap between Nos 160 and 161 diminishes its contribution.
5. The gap between No 160 and the later infill house is occupied by a single storey garage. This is low in height, the visual impact of which is further diminished by the roof sloping away from the host house. The sense of openness and separation from No 161 is maintained overall.
6. It is proposed to replace the garage with a 2-storey extension. This would result in further erosion of the original space between the junction and terrace

- and loss of the remaining openness, which would adversely affect the character and appearance of the area. I appreciate that the extension would not be as tall as the host building, but it would be a substantial structure that would largely block the gap when viewed from the public domain.
7. In addition, the architectural detailing and form of the buildings is notably uniform along the individual rows of terraces. In its consistency with the form of the host terrace, 160 Goddard Avenue also makes a positive contribution to this characteristic of the CA. The existing garage is sufficiently subservient that it does not detract from this pattern.
 8. The large size of the extension and the uncharacteristic position and form of the half dormer window would upset the rhythm of the terrace and lead to an unbalanced appearance when viewed as a whole. Interruption of this uniformity would have an adverse effect on the character and appearance of the CA.
 9. Paragraph 196 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2019) and Policy EN10 of the Swindon Borough Local Plan 2026 (March 2015) (the 'SBLP') recommend that where a development would lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of the heritage asset, as in this case, the harm should be weighed against the public benefits.
 10. The appellant advises that the existing garage makes a negative contribution to the CA and that redevelopment of this would result in an enhancement. However, I found that the garage was low level, and discrete in its design and finish. In addition, improving the condition of the garage is not dependent on receiving planning permission.
 11. It is suggested that the side of the host house is featureless and therefore appears incomplete. However, this is as designed by the architect and this form would have provided a clear break between the terraces and road entrance. For this reason, I do not consider that the side wall contributes negatively to the character and appearance of the CA.
 12. There would be benefit to the local economy from construction of the extension but, given the scale of the development, I consider that this benefit would be small, and insufficient to outweigh the harm to the heritage asset, which is a matter of considerable importance and weight.
 13. I acknowledge that the proposed scheme is an improvement on that previously refused, but the amendments are insufficient to overcome the harm to the CA identified above.

Conclusion

14. The proposal would fail to conserve or enhance the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and is therefore in conflict with Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act (1990) and Policy EN10 of the SBLP. It would also be in conflict with Policy DE1, which requires a high standard of design, respectful of the surrounding context, character and form. I conclude that the proposal does not accord with the development plan when read as a whole and the appeal is dismissed.

B Davies

INSPECTOR