



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 18 June 2021

by Andrew Dale BA (Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 07 July 2021

Appeal Ref. APP/J1535/D/21/3271813

Bowers, The Street, Sheering, Bishop's Stortford CM22 7LZ

- 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 Mrs Jenifer Bull against the decision of Epping Forest District Council.
 - The application ref. EPF/0169/21, dated 20 January 2021, was refused by notice dated 15 March 2021.
 - The development proposed is described on the application form as *"Extend existing side extension, Raise the side extension ridge height 900 mm to allow for additional L1 floor space. Hip roof to NE elevation and insert 1 new dormer to front roof slope to match existing dormers. Construct an open oak framed porch to the new front entrance."*
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for *"Extend existing side extension, Raise the side extension ridge height 900 mm to allow for additional L1 floor space. Hip roof to NE elevation and insert 1 new dormer to front roof slope to match existing dormers. Construct an open oak framed porch to the new front entrance"* at Bowers, The Street, Sheering, Bishop's Stortford CM22 7LZ in accordance with the terms of the application ref. EPF/0169/21, dated 20 January 2021, subject to the following conditions:
 - 1) The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than three years from the date of this decision.
 - 2) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans numbered: 1606-01-A; 1606-02-A; and 1606-03-A.
 - 3) The materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of the development hereby permitted shall match those used in the existing building.

Main issue

2. The main issue is the impact of the proposed development upon the character and appearance of the dwelling and its surroundings.
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Reasons

3. The appeal property is a semi-detached house standing on a corner plot next to the junction between The Street and Orchard Close. Its front elevation faces The Street being separated from it by a large and attractively landscaped front garden. The surrounding area is residential in character.
4. The 2-storey original core of Bowers has been previously extended with a single-storey side extension. Even so, it remains as a relatively compact one-bedroom dwelling. Its original layout must have been quite cramped.
5. By increasing the height of the single-storey extension to create more first floor accommodation and extending out again to the side of it at a 2-storey height, the Council is concerned that the development would not amount to a subservient addition to the original house, would overdevelop the site and would give the appearance of a new dwelling.
6. I can understand this concern. Taking into account the incorporation of and the enlargement to the existing extension, the development would indeed more than double the width of the original cottage at the 2-storey level. Nonetheless, I find various factors in play – adopted policy, history, site context and design – that when taken together lead me to find in favour of the appeal scheme.
7. The most relevant policy from the development plan is Policy DBE10 of the adopted Epping Forest District Local Plan which covers extensions to dwellings. The policy wording refers to how developments may visually affect the existing building which is a somewhat different test to the original building. The proportions and scale of the extension ought to be viewed accordingly.
8. Even if the original building is used as a starting point, I agree with the appellant that it must be acknowledged that it was historically a very small cottage. In order to make it anywhere near suitable for modern day living sizeable extensions should be appropriately anticipated and are likely to be large in terms of proportion compared to the original building. For instance, from measurements I took on site across the front of the property, I found that the existing extension is nearly as wide as the original 2-storey core and yet the dwelling still feels seriously challenged in terms of internal space.
9. There are 3 key aspects to the context of this site. Even in its current extended form, Bowers reads as a rather stunted version of Apple Tree Cottage, the other half of the semi-detached pair. By introducing a second front dormer and some elongation to the 2-storey built frontage, a far better balance between the pair would be achieved. Secondly, there is a wide space to the side of Bowers where the extension is proposed. This space has little merit in itself and there is simply no basis to find that the extension would lead to the overdevelopment of the site. Thirdly, the companion property (Farrago) on the other side of the junction, against which Bowers is also viewed, stands far closer to the highway boundary in Orchard Close than the current house at Bowers. Once the development is completed, they would be almost equidistant from their respective highway boundaries to Orchard Close. In all, the development proposal would relate positively to its context.
10. In design terms, care has been taken to ensure that the new extension's width, bulk and scale are minimised when viewing from the front. The new roof would

have a ridge line well behind and slightly lower than the existing main ridge and no longer than the ridge over the current single-storey extension, retain a very low eaves line across the front and include a hipped end and a matching single dormer. There are currently 2 doors in the front elevation of Bowers, as there are at Apple Tree Cottage, with the principal garden area being at the front. As such, I do not find the replacement of one entrance door with another behind an attractive oak-framed porch to be controversial. In any event, I have assessed the scheme as proposed and I would point out that another grant of planning permission would be required for a second dwelling on this site.

11. Viewed as a whole, I consider that the proposed changes would represent a visually attractive solution that would add to the overall quality of the area, whilst being sufficiently respectful of and complementary to the original and existing building's character, period and form, the local character and street scenes and the setting of the site. I therefore find on the main issue that the proposed development would not have any adverse impacts upon the character and appearance of the dwelling and its surroundings.
12. As the development would be an example of high-quality design, protect and enhance the quality of this built environment and involve the acceptable extension and alteration of a residential building, there would be no conflict with the aims of Policies CP2, DBE9 and DBE10 of the adopted Epping Forest District Local Plan or of Policies DM 9 and DM 10 of the emerging Epping Forest District Local Plan Submission Version 2017.
13. There would be compliance with the key design themes in the National Planning Policy Framework insofar as they relate to achieving well-designed places.
14. In addition to a condition setting a time limit for the commencement of development, a condition requiring that the development is carried out in accordance with the relevant approved drawings is necessary as this provides certainty. I have also imposed the Council's other suggested condition on materials to ensure that the development would safeguard the character and appearance of the area.
15. For the reasons given above and having regard to all other matters raised, including an earlier refusal of planning permission (ref. EPF/2558/20) for extensions and alterations at Bowers and the grant of planning permission (ref. EPF/2249/20) for extensions and alterations at The Sanctuary, and the absence of objections from local residents or local organisations, I conclude that this appeal should be allowed.

Andrew Dale

INSPECTOR