
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 4 November 2021

by R Bartlett PGDip URP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 23 November 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/C1950/D/21/3279777

52 Attimore Road, Welwyn Garden City, AL8 6LP

- 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 Percival against the decision of Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 6/2021/0729/HOUSE, dated 4 March 2021, was refused by notice dated 10 May 2021.
 - The development proposed is demolition of existing side extension and porch. Erection of single storey side extension, entrance porch and part single part two storey rear extension, with associated alterations to openings.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for demolition of existing side extension and porch, erection of single storey side extension, entrance porch and part single part two storey rear extension, with associated alterations to openings at 52 Attimore Road, Welwyn Garden City, AL8 6LP, in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref 6/2021/0729/HOUSE, dated 4 March 2021, subject to the following conditions:
 - 1) The development hereby permitted shall begin not 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: 1278-001, 1278-003 RevB, 1278-004 Rev-B and 1278-006 RevB,
 - 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.

Preliminary Matter

2. Reference is made to the Draft Local Plan Proposed Submission August 2016. However, since there is no certainty that the policies within this will be adopted in their current form, I can afford them limited weight.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the development on the character of the dwelling and on the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

Reasons

4. The site lies within the Welwyn Garden City Conservation Area (CA) where in there is a statutory duty under Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Area) Act 1990 to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of conservation areas.
5. I agree with the Local Planning Authority (LPA) that the significance of the CA is its carefully designed layout and pattern of development comprising sensitively designed buildings, which complement each other. I also acknowledge that the appeal site is in the centre of 3 dwellings, originally of identical design, all of which have been extended and altered.
6. Neighbouring No.54 Attimore Road has single and two-storey extensions of almost identical scale and design to the appeal proposals. No.50 has similar single storey side and front extensions to those that currently exist on the appeal property. These existing extensions and alterations all form part of the character and appearance of the area immediately surrounding the appeal site. Whilst I acknowledge that some of these extensions and alterations may have been approved prior to the introduction of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework), good design has always been a key feature of the planning system. Moreover, in determining the neighbouring extensions, the council clearly would have undertaken their statutory duty under S72 and must therefore have been satisfied that the proposals preserved or enhanced the CA.
7. The side walls and roof slopes of the proposed two storey rear extension would be set in from those of the original dwelling. The eaves and ridge height of the two storey part of the proposal would match the original dwelling, as would the design and pitch of the roof. The spaces between the appeal site and neighbouring dwellings would remain unchanged, retaining the limited glimpsed views through to trees in the rear gardens of the site and surrounding dwellings.
8. The single storey side extension and front entrance porch, which are proposed to be demolished, are not original features of the dwelling and are not of any architectural merit. Replacing these extensions, which comprise highly visible white UPVC fascia boards and grey roof felt with higher quality extensions comprising parapet walls with tile creasing and brick on edge capping together with brick detailing above the new windows and door, would improve and enhance the appearance of the dwelling, particularly when viewed from the front. Although there would be a marginal difference between the height of the garage and the height of the proposed side/porch extensions, this is already the case at present. Due to the separation between the two elements this would not unbalance the appearance of the dwelling, which does not in any event have a symmetrical frontage. Moreover, single storey side extensions of varying heights are not uncommon along Attimore Road.
9. I have considered the LPA's concern regarding the single storey part of the rear extension potentially being visible from the street. However, it would be only very marginally higher than the existing single storey rear extension, which is also higher than the garage and is not visible from the street. Given the set back of the extension and the slight difference in levels, the part of the extension behind the garage would not result in any harm to the street scene or to any architectural value of the house.

10. As I have found that the proposals would preserve, and in part enhance, the character and appearance of the dwelling and the CA, there would be no conflict with policies D1 and D2 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005, the council's Supplementary Design Guide or the Framework, which collectively seek to ensure that new development is of high quality design that relates well to the character and context of its surroundings. I also find no conflict with the Framework in terms of protecting the significance of heritage assets.

Conditions and Conclusion

11. I have imposed conditions setting out the standard time limit for the commencement of the development hereby approved and listing the approved drawing numbers, for the avoidance of doubt. A condition requiring the development to be undertaken using external materials to match the existing dwelling is also necessary to ensure a satisfactory end appearance, which preserves the character and appearance of the CA.
12. The LPA requested a condition requiring that obscure glazing to be fitted in any upper floor side elevation windows. Given that no first floor habitable room windows are proposed in either side elevation of the proposed development, this condition would not meet the tests of being reasonable or necessary.
13. For the reasons given above the appeal is allowed.

Rachael Bartlett

INSPECTOR